

A Companion to Greek and Roman Sexualities

Hubbard, Thomas K.

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BLACKWELL COMPANIONS TO THE ANCIENT WORLD

A COMPANION TO
**GREEK AND
ROMAN
SEXUALITIES**

EDITED BY THOMAS K. HUBBARD



WILEY Blackwell

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A Companion to Greek and Roman Sexualities

Thomas K. Hubbard

**A COMPANION
TO GREEK AND
ROMAN
SEXUALITIES**

Edited by

Thomas K. Hubbard

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Foreword

Over the last 25 years, the study of Graeco-Roman sexualities has mushroomed into an important sub-discipline within classical studies; moreover, it forms a fundamental component of the emerging fields of historical sexology and cultural studies. Courses in gender and sexuality have become a staple of most programs in classical civilization in the Anglophone world. Particularly in light of Foucault's seminal work in *The History of Sexuality*, programs in queer studies or in women's and gender studies must also include serious consideration of Greece and Rome as foundational moments in the evolution of western constructions of sexuality.

Accordingly, the time is ripe for an edited volume that will synthesize the work that has been done and outline promising new directions for future scholarship. Although it necessarily includes chapters on the intersection of gender categories and sexuality, the volume is not envisioned as one on gender *and* sexuality, as such studies often subordinate the latter to constructions of the former. However, the field needs a volume that does not restrict its purview to a single variant of sexuality, such as "homosexuality" or "marriage," since the whole question of modern categories and their relevance to the ancient world is itself deeply fraught and contentious. The various practices and discursive contexts of sexuality must be viewed systematically and holistically. Moreover, it is this volume's aim not to treat Greece and Rome separately, but with sensitivity to both the continuities and differences between the two classical civilizations. Indeed, one of my purposes in editing this work has been to challenge scholars who have previously specialized in aspects of one civilization to consider the relation of their work to the other.

As with most of the volumes in the Blackwell Companions series, the ideal audience is intended to include graduate students in need of targeted overviews, advanced undergraduates wanting an introduction or a reference work, faculty preparing courses in gender and sexuality, and a few interested members of the non-specialist public. I have assembled an international group of scholars from nine countries to treat a range of relevant issues: methodological approaches to sexuality, specific sexual practices, social contexts of sexuality, various literary and artistic genres of evidence, and the influence or interaction of ancient models with belief systems (Judaism, Christianity) or historical periods outside the classical world itself.

This volume aims to open doors to further inquiry, not to provide definitive answers.

In addition to thanking the various contributors who have made this project possible, I would like to acknowledge the help of others, who were not able to participate but nevertheless made valuable suggestions along the way: Tally Kampen, Alan Shapiro, Sarah Iles Johnston, Lesley Dean-Jones, David Halperin, Patricia Rosenmeyer, Ross Kraemer, David Pritchard, Don Mader, André Lardinois, to mention just a few. Two editors of previous Blackwell Companions, Marilyn Skinner and Kirk Ormand, have offered sage advice at several critical stages. I acknowledge the assistance of the Mary Helen Thompson Centennial Professorship in the Humanities at the University of Texas for funds to assist with indexing, and of Dean Randy Diehl of the College of Liberal Arts for providing me with a research leave during the final stages of my editing. And, last but not least, I appreciate the patience and helpfulness of the staff at Wiley-Blackwell, without whose engagement this project would have never been conceived or properly executed.

Thomas K. Hubbard
University of Texas, Austin
November 2012

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Tragedy (1999), *Controlling Desires: Sexuality in Ancient Greece and Rome* (2008), and editor of *A Companion to Sophocles* (2012). His next book, *The Hesiodic Catalogue of Women and Archaic Greece*, is forthcoming.

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Sensuality in the Ancient World (2008).

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Abbreviations

AC	<i>L' Antiquité classique</i>
Ach. Tat.	Achilles Tatius
AClass	<i>Acta Classica</i>
[Acr.]	Pseudo-Acro Grammaticus
AE	<i>L' Année épigraphique</i>
Ael.	Aelian
VH	<i>Varia historia</i>
Aesch.	Aeschylus
Ag.	Agamemnon
Cho.	Choephoroi (<i>The Libation Bearers</i>)
Suppl.	Supplices (<i>The Suppliants</i>)
Aeschin.	Aeschines
In Tim.	<i>In Timarchum</i>
AHB	<i>Ancient History Bulletin</i>
AHR	<i>American Historical Review</i>
AJA	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
AJAH	<i>American Journal of Ancient History</i>
AJP	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
Alciph.	Alciphron
Epist.	<i>Epistulae</i>
AncW	<i>Ancient World</i>
Andoc.	Andocides
ANRW	H. Temporini (ed.), <i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung</i> . Berlin: de Gruyter, 1972–
AP	<i>Anthologia Palatina</i>
Ap. Rhod. Argon.	Apollonius of Rhodes, <i>Argonautica</i>
Apul.	Apuleius
Met.	<i>Metamorphoses</i>
Ar.	Aristophanes
Ach.	<i>Acharnenses</i> (<i>Acharnians</i>)
Av.	<i>Aves</i> (<i>Birds</i>)
Ra.	<i>Ranae</i> (<i>Frogs</i>)
Ecc.	<i>Ecclesiazusae</i> (<i>Assembly Women</i>)
Eq.	<i>Equites</i> (<i>Knights</i>)
Lys.	<i>Lysistrata</i>
Nu.	<i>Nubes</i> (<i>Clouds</i>)
Th.	<i>Thesmophoriazusae</i>
V.	<i>Vespae</i> (<i>Wasps</i>)
Archil.	Archilochus
Arist.	Aristotle
GA	<i>De generatione animalium</i>
HA	<i>Historia animalium</i>
Met.	<i>Metaphysica</i>
Pol.	<i>Politica</i>
Probl.	<i>Problemata</i>
Rh.	<i>Rhetorica</i>
[Arist.]	Pseudo-Aristotle / Aristotle's school
Ath. Pol.	<i>Athenaion politeia</i> (<i>Constitution of Athens</i>)
Mag. mor.	<i>Magna moralia</i>

<i>Phgn.</i>	<i>Physiognomonica</i>
<i>Rh. Al.</i>	<i>Rhetorica ad Alexandrum</i>
ARV	J. D. Beazley, <i>Attic Red-Figure Vase-Painters</i> (2nd edn.). Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962
Ath.	Athenaeus
August.	St. Augustine
<i>Civ. Dei</i>	<i>De civitate Dei</i>
<i>Conf.</i>	<i>Confessions</i>
BCAR	<i>Bullettino della Commissione Archeologica Comunale in Roma</i>
BCH	<i>Bulletin du Correspondance hellénique</i>
BHM	<i>Bulletin of the History of Medicine</i>
BICS	<i>Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies, University of London</i>
BMCR	<i>Bryn Mawr Classical Review</i>
CA	<i>Classical Antiquity</i>
Calp. Fl.	Calpurnius Flaccus
Cass. Dio	Cassius Dio
Cat.	Catullus
CB	<i>The Classical Bulletin</i>
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum, series Latina
CD	(Cairo) Damascus Document
Cic.	Cicero
<i>Cat.</i>	<i>In Catilinam</i>
<i>Cael.</i>	<i>Pro Caelio</i>
<i>Dom.</i>	<i>De domo sua</i>
<i>Fam.</i>	<i>Epistulae ad familiares</i>
<i>Inv. rhet.</i>	<i>De inventione rhetorica</i>
<i>Mil.</i>	<i>Pro Milone</i>
<i>Phil.</i>	<i>Orationes Philippicae</i>
<i>Rep.</i>	<i>De republica</i>
<i>Rosc. Am.</i>	<i>Pro Roscio Amerino</i>
<i>Tusc.</i>	<i>Tusculanae disputationes</i>
<i>Verr.</i>	<i>In Verrem</i>
CIL	<i>Corpus inscriptionum Latinarum</i>
CJ	<i>Classical Journal</i>
Clem.	Clement
CLE	<i>Carmina Latina epigraphica</i>
Clem. Al.	Clemens Alexandrinus / Clement of Alexandria
<i>Comm. in Job</i>	<i>Commentary on Job</i>
<i>Quis dives</i>	<i>Quis dives salvetur?</i>
<i>Protr.</i>	<i>Protrepticus</i>
<i>Strom.</i>	<i>Stromateis</i>
Cor	Corinthians
CP	<i>Classical Philology</i>
CQ	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
CR	<i>Classical Review</i>
CronErc	<i>Cronache ercolanesi</i>
CW	<i>Classical World</i>
<i>Decal.</i>	<i>De decalogo</i>
Dem.	Demosthenes
[Dem.]	Pseudo-Demosthenes
DL	Diogenes Laertius
<i>Dig.</i>	<i>Digesta</i>
Din.	Dinarchos
Diod. Sic.	Diodorus Siculus
Dion. Hal.	Dionysius Halicarnassensis
<i>Ant. Rom.</i>	<i>Antiquitates Romanae</i>
Deut	Deuteronomy

DHA	<i>Dialogues d'histoire ancienne</i>
DT	<i>Defixionum tabellae</i> , edited by Auguste Audollent. Paris: Fontemoing, 1904
DTA	<i>Defixionum tabellae atticae</i> (IG iii 3), edited by R. Wünsch. Berlin, 1897
EMC	<i>Échos du monde classique</i>
Eun.	Eunapios
VS	<i>Vitae sophistarum</i>
Eup.	Eupolis
Eur.	Euripides
Andr.	<i>Andromache</i>
Ba.	<i>Bacchae</i>
El.	<i>Electra</i>
Hel.	<i>Helena</i>
Hipp.	<i>Hippolytus</i>
Med.	<i>Medea</i>
Euseb.	Eusebius of Caesarea
Praep. evang.	<i>Praeparatio evangelica</i>
Vit. Const.	<i>Vita Constantini</i>
Ezek	Ezekiel
Exod	Exodus
FGrH	<i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> , edited by F. Jacoby. Berlin: Weidmann, 1923–58 / Leiden: Brill, 1961–98
Fronto, Ep.	Fronto, <i>Epistulae</i>
G&R	<i>Greece and Rome</i>
Gen	Genesis
GLQ	<i>Gay and Lesbian Quarterly</i>
GRBS	<i>Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies</i>
Hdt.	Herodotus, <i>Historiae</i>
Herod.	Herodas
Hes.	Hesiod
Op.	<i>Opera et dies</i>
Th.	<i>Theogonia</i>
Hipp.	Hippocratic corpus
Mul.	<i>De mulierum affectibus</i> (<i>Gynaikeia, Diseases of Women</i>)
Hor.	Horace
Carm.	<i>Carmina</i> (<i>Odes</i>)
Epist.	<i>Epistulae</i>
Sat.	<i>Saturae</i>
Hos	Hosea
HSCP	<i>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</i>
HTHR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
Hymn. Hom. Ven.	<i>Hymnus Homericus ad Venerem</i> (<i>Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite</i>)
I.Ephesos	Wankel, H., R. Merkelbach et al., eds., <i>Die Inschriften von Ephesos I–VIII</i> . Bonn, 1979–84
IG	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i>
ICS	<i>Illinois Classical Studies</i>
IvO	W. Dittenberger and K. Purgold, eds., <i>Inschriften von Olympia</i> . Berlin, 1896
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
Jer	Jeremiah
Jer.	Jerome
Ep.	<i>Epistulae</i>
JfsZ	<i>Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen</i>
JH	<i>Journal of Homosexuality</i>
JHB	<i>Journal of the History of Biology</i>

<i>JHS</i>	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
<i>JHSex</i>	<i>Journal of the History of Sexuality</i>
<i>JRA</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Archaeology</i>
<i>JRS</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
<i>JSI</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism</i>
<i>Jub.</i>	<i>Jubilees</i>
<i>Judg</i>	<i>Judges</i>
<i>Juv.</i>	<i>Juvenal</i>
<i>JWI</i>	<i>Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes</i>
<i>Kgs</i>	<i>Kings</i>
<i>Lactant.</i>	<i>Lactantius</i>
<i>Div. inst.</i>	<i>Divinae institutiones</i>
<i>LCM</i>	<i>Liverpool Classical Monthly</i>
<i>Lev</i>	<i>Leviticus</i>
<i>Lex. Seg.</i>	<i>Lexica Segueriana</i>
<i>LMC</i>	<i>Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae</i> , vols. 1–9. Zürich, Munich, Düsseldorf, 1981– 99
<i>Luc.</i>	<i>Lucian</i>
<i>Am.</i>	<i>Amores</i>
<i>Dial. meret.</i>	<i>Dialogi meretricii (Dialogues of Courtesans)</i>
<i>Lucr. RN</i>	<i>Lucretius, De rerum natura</i>
<i>Lys.</i>	<i>Lysias</i>
<i>Mart.</i>	<i>Martial</i>
<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epigrammata</i>
<i>MD</i>	<i>Materiali e discussioni per l'analisi dei testi classici</i>
<i>MDAI (A)</i>	<i>Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts (Athen)</i>
<i>MEFRA</i>	<i>Mélanges de l'École française de Rome Antiquité</i>
<i>Men.</i>	<i>Menander</i>
<i>Epit.</i>	<i>Epitrepontes</i>
<i>Mt</i>	<i>Matthew</i>
<i>Nep.</i>	<i>Cornelius Nepos, De viris illustribus</i>
<i>Alc.</i>	<i>Alcibiades</i>
<i>Praef.</i>	<i>Preface</i>
<i>Num</i>	<i>Numbers</i>
<i>OSAP</i>	<i>Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy</i>
<i>Ov.</i>	<i>Ovid</i>
<i>Am.</i>	<i>Amores</i>
<i>Ars am.</i>	<i>Ars amatoria</i>
<i>Her.</i>	<i>Heroides</i>
<i>Met.</i>	<i>Metamorphoses</i>
<i>Pont.</i>	<i>Epistulae ex Ponto</i>
<i>Rem. am.</i>	<i>Remedia amoris</i>
<i>Tr.</i>	<i>Tristia</i>
<i>P&P</i>	<i>Past and Present</i>
<i>P. Eleph.</i>	<i>Elephantine papyrus: Elephantine-Papyri</i> , edited by O. Rubensohn. Berlin, 1907, reprint Milan, 1972
<i>P. Flor.</i>	<i>Florentine papyrus from the Biblioteca Medicea Laurentiana (Florence)</i>
<i>P. Köln</i>	<i>Köln (Cologne) papyrus</i>
<i>P. L. Bat.</i>	<i>Leiden papyrus: Papyri Graeci Musaei antiquari publici Lugduni Batavi</i> , edited by C. Leemans. Leiden, 1843
<i>P. Lond.</i>	<i>Greek papyri in the British Museum, London</i>
<i>P. Oxy.</i>	<i>Oxyrhynchus papyrus (edition of Oxyrhynchus papyri: The Oxyrhynchus Papyri journal)</i>

P. Tebt.	Tebtunis papyrus: <i>Tebtunis Papyri</i> , edited by P. Grenfell, A. S. Hunt, J. Gilbert Smyly, and J. E. Goodspeed, vols 1–3. London, 1902–33
P. Yadin	papyri from the Bar Kochba period in the Cave of Letters: discovered by Yigael Yadin and published by Naphtali Lewis, Yigael Yadin and Jonas Greenfield in <i>The Documents from the Bar Kokhba Period in the Cave of Letters</i> , Jerusalem 1989
Paus.	Pausanias
PBA	<i>Proceedings of the British Academy</i>
PCG	<i>Poetae comici Graeci</i> , edited by R. Kassel and C. Austin. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1992–
PCPS	<i>Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society</i>
Pers.	Persius
<i>Sat.</i>	<i>Saturae</i>
Petr.	Peronius
<i>Sat.</i>	<i>Satyricon</i>
PG	<i>Patrologia Graeca</i> (Migne)
PGM	<i>Papyri Graecae magicae: Die griechischen Zauberpapyri</i> , edited by K. Preisendanz, revised by A. Henrichs. Stuttgart 1973 (2nd edn.)
Ph.	Philo of Alexandria (Iudaeus)
<i>Op.</i>	<i>De officio mundi</i>
Philostr.	Philostratos
<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistulae</i>
Phld.	Philodemus of Gadara
<i>Hom.</i>	<i>Peri tou kath' Homēron agathou basileōs (On the Good King according to Homer)</i>
Phryn.	Phrynichus
Pind.	Pindar
<i>Isth.</i>	<i>Isthmian Odes</i>
<i>Ol.</i>	<i>Olympian Odes</i>
<i>Pyth.</i>	<i>Pythian Odes</i>
Pl.	Plato
<i>Chrm.</i>	<i>Charmides</i>
<i>Cra.</i>	<i>Cratylus</i>
<i>Euthphr.</i>	<i>Euthyphro</i>
<i>Lg.</i>	<i>Leges (Laws)</i>
<i>Ly.</i>	<i>Lysis</i>
<i>Phdr.</i>	<i>Phaedrus</i>
<i>Prt.</i>	<i>Protagoras</i>
<i>R.</i>	<i>Respublica</i>
<i>Smp.</i>	<i>Symposium</i>
Plaut.	Plautus
<i>Cas.</i>	<i>Casina</i>
<i>Truc.</i>	<i>Truculentus</i>
Plb.	Polybius
Plin.	Pliny the Elder
<i>HN</i>	<i>Historia naturalis</i>
Plin.	Pliny the Younger
<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistulae</i>
Plu.	Plutarch
<i>Alc.</i>	<i>Alcibiades</i>
<i>Alex.</i>	<i>Alexander</i>
<i>Amat.</i>	<i>Amatorius (Eroticus)</i>
<i>Con. praec.</i>	<i>Coniugslia praecepta</i>
<i>De mul. vir.</i>	<i>De mulierum virtutibus</i>
<i>Lyc.</i>	<i>Lycurgus</i>

Lys.
 Mar.
 Pel.
 Quaest. Rom.
 Sol.
 TG
 PMG
 Prop.
 PSI

 Quint.
 Inst.
 [Quint.]
 Decl. ma.
 Rev
 RhM
 Sall.
 Cat.
 SEG
 Sen.
 Controv.
 Sen.
 Ag.
 Dial.
 Ep.
 Med.
 Oed.
 Ph.
 Vit. beat.
 SHA / Hist. Aug.

 SIG

 Sil.
 Pun.
 SM
 Soph.
 El.
 OT
 Sor.
 Gyn.
 Spec.
 Suet.
 Aug.
 Calig.
 Claud.
 Dom.
 Iul.
 Tib.
 Vit.
 Tac.
 Agr.
 Ann.
 Hist.
 TAPA

 Tert.
 Ad nat.
 De exhort. cast.

Lysander
 Marius
 Pelopidas
 Quaestiones Romanae
 Solon
 Tiberius Gracchus
 Poetae melici Graeci, edited by D. L. Page, 1962
 Propertius
 Papiri greci e latini: Società Italiana per la
 Ricerca dei Papiri Greci e Latini in Egitto
 Quintilian
 Institutio oratoria
 Pseud—Quintilian
 Declamatio maior
 Revelation (= Apocalypse)
 Rheinisches Museum für Philologie
 Sallust
 Bellum Catilinae
 Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum
 Lucius Annaeus Seneca the Elder
 Controversiae
 Lucius Annaeus Seneca the Younger
 Agamemnon
 Dialogi
 Epistulae
 Medea
 Oedipus
 Phaedra
 De vita beata
 Scriptores Historiae Augustae / Historia
 Augusta
 W. Dittenberger, Sylloge inscriptionum
 Graecarum (3rd edn.). Leipzig, 1915–24
 Silius Italicus
 Punica
 Supplementum magicum
 Sophocles
 Electra
 Oedipus Tyrannus (Oedipus the King)
 Soranus
 Gynaecia (Gynaecology)
 De specialibus legibus
 Suetonius
 Augustus
 Gaius Caligula
 Claudius
 Domitianus
 Divus Iulius
 Tiberius
 Vitellius
 Tacitus
 Agricola
 Annales
 Historiae
 Transactions of the American Philological
 Association
 Tertullian
 Ad nationes
 De exhortatione castitatis (Exhortation to

Fuga
TGF

Theoc.

Thphr.

HP

Thuc.

Tib.

Tob.

[Ulp.]

Val. Max.

Verg.

Aen.

Ecl.

Wis

YCS

Xen.

An.

Lac.

Mem.

Oec.

Smp.

Xen. Eph.

Habr.

ZPE

Chastity)

De fuga in persecutione

Tragicorum Graecorum fragmenta, edited by B.
Snell, R. Kannicht, & S. Radt, Göttingen, 1971–
2004

Theocritus

Theophrastus

Historia plantarum (History of Plants)

Thucydides

Tibullus

Tobias

Pseudo-Ulpianus

Valerius Maximus

Virgil

Aeneid

Eclogae

Wisdom of Solomon

Yale Classical Studies

Xenophon

Anabasis

Respublica Lacedaemoniorum

Memorabilia

Oeconomicus

Symposium

Xenophon of Ephesus

Habrokomes and Anthia

Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik

Note on Ancient Greek Words, Names, and Titles

The rules adopted in the transliteration of Greek words are applied consistently throughout the volume. The few exceptions are local and follow authorial preference for the prevailing tradition in one field or another (e.g. occasional spellings like *nymphē*, *anakalypsis*, or *symmetria* vs. *numphē*, *anakalupsis*, or *summetria* and side by side with *psuchē* indicate a context where the standard spelling of these terms in art historical scholarship prevails). Otherwise terms of art (such as names of ancient vase types, parts of drama, and the like) have been treated as English words, retaining (again) the usual spelling by which specialists in these subfields normally designate them (e.g. *kylix*, *lekythos*).

Titles of Greek and Latin ancient works, when not translated, appear in the traditional Latin form; abbreviations for titles follow the most familiar standards, usually the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* and the *Liddel Scott Jones Greek–English Lexikon*. Greek proper names are not transliterated, of course, but tend to be rendered according to Greek conventions, not Latin. Exceptions are most of the names of well-known classical authors and relatively few names of very famous toponyms and literary or historical characters, all of which are Latinized (Herodotus, Ibycus, Ithaca) or sometimes Anglicized (Ganymede, Oedipus, Pindar), according to the prevailing convention.

Chapter 1

Feminist Theory

Marilyn B. Skinner

Assigning a chapter on feminism to lead off a *Companion to Ancient Sexuality* is a politically generous gesture, for which the editor earns my thanks. Many readers of this volume will recall the “sexuality wars” of the 1990s, which split progressive classicists into two acrimonious factions, with noxious effects on scholarly investigation and, worse, on collegiality. It is conventional to designate the opposing sides “feminist and Foucauldian” and to characterize the debate as a feminist attack on the paradigm of ancient sexuality popularized by Michel Foucault and his followers.¹ However, that depiction is arguably reductionist, for it simplifies positions and overlooks many efforts made by participants to nuance and explain them. While attempting to mediate, I presented a detailed résumé of the basic issues; thus it seems unnecessary to do so again.² In the following chapter, my primary aim is to move beyond last century's disputes to point to an emerging synthesis of feminist gender analysis and Foucauldian-inspired discursive critique, which is poised to illuminate striking new aspects of Greek and Roman erotic life.

One further consideration should be noted before I leave the subject of the sexuality wars. The controversy has imparted a painful lesson to all concerned about the relative accuracy of Foucault's own observations on “regimes of truth.” In a 1977 interview—one of the key chapters in *Power/Knowledge*—he speaks of *la vérité* as “a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements” that is “linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it” (Foucault 1980, 133). A “regime of truth” might be summarily described as a mechanism for weighing and affirming truth values. Classics as a discipline—a “collection of discursive practices” about ancient texts and material culture—fits the rubric perfectly (Hitchcock 2008, 129).

Its gatekeeping procedures include mastering two learned languages and achieving rapid reading capacity in at least three modern vernaculars. Aspiring philologists must also demonstrate thorough knowledge of a range of literary texts and other kinds of primary evidence—inscriptions, papyrological remains, artifacts—that bear upon interpretation. Although less stiff than it once was, the expository prose of classics remains abstract and cerebral, an artificial idiom many students find hard to comprehend, much less manipulate. Most relevant to discussion here, a system of “citational politics” anchors contributions in progress to the past: “The heavily footnoted text upholds the tyranny of the discipline, which is kept in place by referencing a long genealogy of scholarly authority, a trope of homage to the ancestors of the discipline.”³ What is real knowledge, then, is what is cited with attribution; such “truth” has cleared all the hurdles imposed by a scheme of operations designed to screen out unwelcome hypotheses. Whatever the flaws in Foucault's reading of ancient history, his analysis of how ideas are validated academically was spot-on.

Of course, that is not the whole story: both Foucault's blueprint for knowledge production and my sketch of how it works in our own field are circumscribed models.⁴ Much seeps through the cracks, as the pervasive impact of feminism on classics itself shows. Accumulation of learning is not always conscious and deliberate. Crucial insights acquired through casual reading and conversation are often subliminally absorbed into a paradigm, without ascription, as the notional background to what is eventually postulated. Feminism, furthermore, has tempered disciplinary protocols, breaking down hierarchy by encouraging collaborative professional activities and by advocating the practice of anonymous peer review. Yet the authoritarian framework of classics blocked out above still runs counter to the egalitarian principles of feminist theory. Hence a chapter purporting to offer the definitive overview of a given field of feminist inquiry, in this case scholarship on ancient sexuality, might appear to be complicit in a Foucauldian “regime of truth.” Dogmatic pronouncements would be understandably resented by fellow feminist scholars, especially those whose contributions had been omitted. Let me stipulate, then, that there are many ways of framing the present narrative; what follows is just one.

In the Beginning

In the early 1970s, well before K. J. Dover and Michel Foucault

produced their influential works, there was neither ancient sexuality nor gender studies—only “women in antiquity,” and little enough of that. With the first stirrings of second-wave feminism, classicists had begun to examine the evidence for ancient women's lives and to introduce undergraduate courses on the topic into the curriculum (McManus 1997, 14–15). Before those developments, treatment of sources was relatively unsophisticated; the positivist bent of classical scholarship insured that efforts were largely concerned with the amassing of *Realien* (Sullivan 1973a, 5–6; Blok 1987, 4–6). Now a new methodological self-awareness emerged. In December 1972, at the 104th annual meeting of the American Philological Association, a panel of papers on “Ancient Greek Women and Modern Criticism” chaired by Mary R. Lefkowitz dared to ask whether dismissive scholarly pronouncements on Sappho and epic heroines might be informed by present-day sex prejudice. The answer was a firm “yes.”

Two significant publications, a special issue of *Arethusa* edited by J. P. Sullivan in the spring of 1973 (Sullivan 1973b) and Sarah B. Pomeroy's groundbreaking social history *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity* (Pomeroy 1975), together established measures for dealing with admittedly lacunose data (McManus 1997, 15–19). This set of procedures increased scholarly sensitivity to atypical phenomena and encouraged closer questioning of documentation. When speaking of ancient women, for example, economic class and other determining factors had to be taken into account; the male-oriented nature of the evidence meant that primary and secondary sources required assessment of bias; dissenting views need not be excluded; cautious extrapolation might compensate for distortions or gaps in the record. “Women in antiquity” was beginning to organize itself as a distinct subfield. Once it had achieved proper methodological rigor and displayed its positivist credentials, it could be incorporated, with relatively few objections, into the discipline, though merely as a subfield. Its marginalized status was a direct consequence of the nineteenth-century historiographic assumption that women, relegated as they were to the domestic and biological spheres, were in a sense outside history (Blok 1987, 6–11).

From the outset, meanwhile, second-wave feminism had taken a keen interest in sexuality. Applying Simone de Beauvoir's thesis that sex was the distinction that established woman as Other and identified her with biology and the body (de Beauvoir 1974, xix, 3–41), radical feminists defined heterosexual relations, especially within the nuclear family, as a primary locus of oppression, vulnerable to searching critique.⁵ While most scholars working on Greek and Roman women did not associate themselves with a radical feminist position, they accepted the premise that investigation of sexuality was a legitimate

part of a feminist approach to classical studies. Consequently such inquiries became one major element in treatments of ancient women. The 1973 special issue of *Arethusa* contained two essays on sexual topics. K. J. Dover's "Classical Greek Attitudes to Sexual Behavior" (Dover 1973) attempts a basic, though necessarily restricted, explanation of protocols for Athenian citizens, male and female. Dorothea Wender's "Plato: Misogynist, Paedophile, and Feminist" seeks to resolve apparent paradoxes in Plato's philosophical attitudes toward women and is particularly interesting for its imaginative, if somewhat misguided, effort to recover the consciousness of a historical male figure presumed to be "homosexual" in orientation. Despite the lack of first-person evidence for women's private lives, Pomeroy included in her 1975 history not only prescriptions on women's sexual behavior but plausible speculation about how they might have satisfied their own desires and dealt with prostitution, infanticide, contraception, abortion, and enslaved sexual service as matter-of-fact realities for many women.

Revisiting Pomeroy's selective bibliography in the *Arethusa* special issue provides more insight into the perceived connection between women and sexuality as research subjects (Pomeroy 1973, 125–57). Classical Greece and Rome are allotted separate bibliographic surveys, each with a short listing of "erotic" materials. In the Greek section, written by David Schaps, three of the four items mentioned are largely concerned with pederasty (138). Even discussions of male homoerotic practices were therefore at home in the field. Pomeroy references only two books on Roman sexual mores, by Otto Kiefer (1934) and Pierre Grimal (1967) respectively. Although each devotes considerable attention to women, she cannot recommend them or other works of their kind without reservations (148). Her scruples are understandable. Popular accounts of Roman sexual life dwelt mainly on moralizing or satiric allegations of female misbehavior, happily accepting their sources' most remarkable claims at face value. One task of the feminist scholar was therefore to debunk that sensationalized picture of the "emancipated" Roman woman.

Feminist classical scholars were also drawn to Roman studies by what they perceived as an unequivocal correlation in Latin literary texts between male hegemony and obscene verbal aggression. That past history "illuminates contemporary problems in relationships between men and women" was one justification Pomeroy used to explain why she had written her book (Pomeroy 1995, xvii). If the historian has a mandate to explore the origins of gender inequality in order to know why discrimination continues to be institutionalized, one place to start is with the discourses that facilitate it. Consequently, several articles appearing at the end of the decade analyzed the power

claims implicit in ribald or salacious language.⁶ This approach culminated in Amy Richlin's *The Garden of Priapus* (1983), an in-depth exploration of Roman sexual humor and its function in asserting the superiority of the speaker over targeted individuals or groups.

Richlin's work fully legitimated the study of ancient obscenity and related forms of sexual expression, visual and verbal, as a way of understanding the power dynamics inherent in Greek and Roman culture (Skinner 1986, 253, 257). At the same time it broached the question of how the contemporary feminist researcher is to react when confronted with ancient material distasteful to her. To illustrate the harmful quality of aggressive humor, Richlin cited links between violent sexual fantasies and acts of physical violence postulated in feminist research on pornography (77–80).⁷ Accordingly, she concluded, “Priapus”—that is, the tendentious humor characteristic of the texts she had examined—was no longer funny (213). In this fashion *The Garden of Priapus* helped to establish the convention of frankly “interested” scholarship that sought to change the present through gritty exposure of unpleasant truths about the past (Reckford 1996, 313–14). In Hellenic studies, Eva Keuls' *The Reign of the Phallus* (1985) had a similar aim, using vase paintings, many quite explicit, to substantiate the charge that democratic Athens was a “phallocracy” in which adult citizen males, who constituted the only advantaged group, harshly exploited inferiors, for the most part women. Predictably, certain reviewers were uncomfortable with that abandonment of conventional academic objectivity.⁸ In their polemic stance, however, these books, heavily indebted to feminist theory and terminology, seemed very much the products of their historical moment.

For the first decade of widespread scholarly attention to ancient sexuality, then, the course of development is comparatively linear. Prompted by second-wave feminism, some classicists entering the field during the 1970s began to investigate conditions of life for ancient women, including restrictions upon their own control of their bodies and the notion of woman's nature that authorized such curbs. Others began to trace relationships among sex, language, and power, particularly when manifested in offensive or threatening speech. After that the genealogy, if I may use that word, becomes more convoluted. K. J. Dover's *Greek Homosexuality* was published in 1978, to instant acclaim and widespread acceptance of his dominance–submission paradigm of Athenian sexual relations, which, according to Paul Veyne (1985), fit the Roman evidence equally well. The chapter on Rome in John Boswell's *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (1980), though the most extensive English-language treatment of Roman homoeroticism up to that date, was much less

influential among classicists due to Boswell's categorical denial of existing legal or social penalties directed at "gay people or their sexuality" (87), an anachronistic statement that, as his critics saw it, begged several methodological questions.⁹ While both Dover (1978, 171–84, esp. 181) and Boswell (1980, 61–3 with nn. 3 and 4) indicate familiarity with the new work on ancient women, neither adopts a feminist perspective. Each is preoccupied with relations between males, paying only token attention to female homoeroticism.

Meanwhile, of course, Michel Foucault was writing his substantial *Histoire de la sexualité*, whose first volume, *La Volonté de savoir*, was published in Paris in 1974, with an English translation (*The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1: *An Introduction*) following in 1978. That preliminary study, dealing with the modern era, scarcely mentions Greeks or Romans. It is important to note, though, that during the interval between the first and the remaining volumes, in which the project underwent a "theoretical shift" in order to be restructured around the self-constitution of the desiring subject in antiquity (Foucault 1986, 6–9), its author was reading not only Dover and Veyne, to whose work he professes himself much indebted, but also Boswell and Pomeroy, both cited in his later bibliographies. By 1984, the year of Foucault's death and of the French publication of the second and third volumes of the *Histoire* (Foucault 1988), it was no longer possible to regard him as a scholar wholly isolated from contemporary Anglo-American currents of thought in classical studies, including feminist scholarship. It would be absurd to claim that Foucault's approach to the ancient texts discussed in these two subsequent volumes was anything other than androcentric: the fallacies inherent in his strict concentration upon the idealized male subject of protreptic treatises are amply documented.¹⁰ Yet in tracing the expansion of scholarly interest in Greek and Roman sexual codes from that point forward we cannot posit two entirely separate channels, Foucauldian and feminist; instead we have to take account of "a network of bilateral influences" (Skinner 1996, 112–13). The four pioneering collections of Foucauldian-inspired essays by classicists that appeared simultaneously in a single year, 1990, and thereby marked the establishment of ancient sexuality as an independent topic of inquiry, all professed intellectual indebtedness to feminist theory. Two of them—the volumes with multiple contributors—included authors who openly adopted a feminist stance in order to explore constructions of female desire in literature.¹¹ In the succeeding decades, certain assertions in Foucault's account of Greco-Roman sexual ethics were to lose their compelling force. With the rise of gender theory and its manifold elaborations by poststructuralists, though, his insights into discursive economies have become axiomatic for many feminist

students of antiquity.

Manifestations of Gender

The mid-1980s mark another turning point for intersections between feminism and work on ancient sexuality, because it was just then that gender began to be widely deployed as a category of analysis. At an early stage of second-wave scholarship, feminists had begun using the linguistic term “gender” to designate the social and cultural constructions of masculinity and femininity mapped onto biological sex (West and Zimmerman 1987, 125–6). While that tactic served to repudiate strict biological determinism by calling attention to the arbitrary components of gender roles (“blue for boys, pink for girls,” as I remember telling students), it still linked gender to “natural” sexual difference. Consequently it masked the operations of gender as the representation of a relation, that is, as the assignment of an individual to one of two groupings within an asymmetrical system (de Lauretis 1987, 1–5; Flax 1990, 23). Historians warned that the use of gender as an analytic tool required awareness that it articulated and legitimated power imbalances (Scott 1988, 41–46). Furthermore, gender was seen to be basic to the constitution of the self, thereby shaping subjective experience (Flax 1990, 25–6). These complicating moves embedded gender even more firmly within linguistic schemes (Elam 2005). Judith Butler finally took the discursive view of gender to the furthest extreme by explaining it as a performance, in other words “a stylized repetition of acts” (1990, 139–41), and, as a follow-up, by theorizing the intelligible material body as a product of the “regulatory ideal” of heterosexuality (1993, 1–2). Since then, larger scale attempts to investigate gender across multiple domains —“cultural systems, normative concepts, social institutions, and subjective identities”—have been undertaken, although they tend to assign it explanatory force by implicating it in discourses that promote reproduction, and thus by anchoring it again to the sexed body (Hawkesworth 2000, 146). No matter how “gender” is conceptualized, its separation from “sex” and consequent problematization are regarded, together, as the single most crucial advance contributed by late twentieth-century feminism to social theory (Flax 1990, 21; Sedgwick 1990, 27–8).

For classicists in the last decade of the millennium, one result of incorporating a more informed conception of gender into work on sexuality was an expansion of analytical approaches. Psychoanalytic criticism, which in its strictly Freudian manifestations had fallen into

disfavor, enjoyed a striking renaissance, for scholars were beginning to recognize a need to posit a psychic substrate in connection with ancient cultural constructions of the gendered self (Partner 1993, 432 and 442). Those who found Foucault's descriptive account of sexual discourses inadequate—because it neglected the role played by eroticized fantasy in the configuration of desire,¹² or because it did not explain radical shifts in ideological frameworks and the emergence of male subjectivities that violated prescriptive formulas¹³—turned instead for theoretical guidance to Lacan's model of ego formation as a process structured through language. Feminist classicists, confronting an overwhelming preponderance of male-authored and male-oriented literary products, applied the principles of the French Lacanians Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray, and Julia Kristeva, who collectively denied that female subjectivity could be articulated within a “phallogocentric” western discursive framework. That postulate induced critics to treat the figure of woman represented in ancient texts created by men as a stratagem for authorial self-fashioning.¹⁴ Not all feminist investigators, though, adopted a discursive approach to gender. Reflecting some historians' objections that poststructuralist analyses obliterate women's lived experience,¹⁵ Richlin (1992a: xviii–xx) defended the use of essentialist, materialist, and even positivist tenets in writing transhistorical narratives of oppression. Pursuing her interest in theories of the pornographic, she also edited a collection of essays (1992b) in which contributors evaluated ancient literary and visual products, not all of them overtly sexual, in the light of radical feminist Susanne Kappeler's appraisal of aesthetic images of the female as a mode of objectification.¹⁶ Yet in a subsequent study Richlin (1993a) acknowledged the validity of work on local differences in tandem with “grand theory.” Conceding the import of cultural specificity in patriarchal arrangements promoted interest in the singularity of Roman gender schemes.

Greek and Roman: Contrasts and Consequences

As they delved into the ideological functions of gender, researchers noted that its deployment in Greek cultural poetics was at odds with the part it played in Roman social and political communication. Treatments of myth, ritual, and symbolism undertaken by structuralists based at the *École pratique des hautes études* in Paris during the 1970s presented classical Greek thought as organized

according to polarities, in which “male” and “female” were one of nine other pairs subsumed beneath the overarching frame of the “limited” and the “unlimited.”¹⁷ Ontological opposition gave rise to secondary antitheses in the social sphere, such as *nomos* vs. *phusis* or civilization vs. barbarism. Any of those dyads could be metonymically aligned with gender, allowing cultural disruption to be portrayed as gender slippage. Thus, on the level of metaphor as well as on that of everyday life, the distinction between male and female was arguably the vital determining principle in Greek culture (Foxhall 1998, 136). Despite that essential polarization, anomaly might be tolerated in the short term—as it was in Athenian drama, where sophisticated explorations of masculine psychological and social concerns were achieved by mimetically entering the feminine mode, that is, by “playing the other” (Zeitlin 1996, 363–4). Since the antithesis of male and female was metaphysically grounded, however, the restoration of polarity inevitably imposed closure. A fundamental elasticity in the system had managed to relieve the original stress.

In the Roman *mentalité*, conversely, there was no ontological gap between genders. Because elite women as well as men played a role in the public world, participating directly in wide-ranging patronage networks and indirectly furthering the interests of natal and marital kin, their confinement to the household sphere was only notional. As they extended the reputation and influence of their male relatives, women were imagined as “same” as well as “other”: they might be openly praised for displaying male *virtus* (e.g., Cic. *Rosc. Am.* 147; Sen. *Dial.* 12.16.5) or they might perpetuate specific excellences of their fathers (e.g., Hortensia's hereditary eloquence, Val. Max. 8.3.3).¹⁸ Gender was a more fluid, ambiguous construct than in the Greek world and was therefore ideal for troping aristocratic unease. Power, status, and male identity were constantly being renegotiated under the republic as great families competed for honors, exposing individual players to the vagaries of popular opinion; in the imperial age, attempts by the weakened nobility to maintain prestige and self-esteem in the face of an often capricious autocracy triggered even more radical anxieties. Implicated as it was in contingent issues of autonomy and hegemony, Roman masculinity could be considered an “achieved state, radically underdetermined by anatomical sex” (Gleason 1995, 59). Hence the perception of inferiority, whether in birth, wealth, or other forms of symbolic and moral capital, translated into loss of virility for the subject, to be in turn projected as effeminacy onto abject categories of persons. What distinguishes this metonymic use of gender from classical Greek instances of the trope is the permanence of gender failure. Once compromised, as in Catullus 63 or Horace *Odes* 3.6, the masculine principles of rationality and

patriotic duty cannot reassert themselves.

With this basic distinction drawn, some corollary postulates have lately undergone reconsideration (Skinner 1997; Fredrick 2002a). Practical effects of the sex/gender system were not homogeneous throughout the Greek and Roman worlds. Behaviors possessed different ethical and legal valances: while idealized boy love was an integral part of civic life in archaic and fifth-century Athens, in Rome the seduction of freeborn youths was liable to prosecution as a criminal sexual offense, *stuprum*. Historically, the Roman matron of good family could show herself in public with impunity, and even bring credit to her relations while doing so, whereas etiquette prohibited public recognition for her classical Greek counterpart; only in the Hellenistic period, with the decline of older forms of social cohesion, could prominent women begin to receive civic honors. Dover's and Foucault's "isonomic" dominance–submission model, in which the asymmetrical relationship between partners, inserting and receptive, mirrors the supremacy of the adult citizen male over all other social groups—wives, boys, non-citizens, slaves, and passive adult males—once seemed an obvious instance of the tight linkage posited by feminists between gender structures and organized economies of power.¹⁹ However, that model is now being challenged vigorously by those who regard it as overly simplistic.²⁰ Furthermore, what was formulated with nominally democratic Athens in mind may not work at all for Rome, where hierarchical configurations of space encroached upon the social self, increasing the liability to physical discomfort in a manner analogous to that of non-sexual "penetration" (Fredrick 2002b, 237).²¹ There degrees of status were so tempered by other considerations, including material circumstances, that no single vector, not even gender, unequivocally prevailed at all times and for all grades of society.

Finally, the unqualified binarism of ancient sex–gender systems as well as their hierarchy is no longer taken for granted. In accordance with the anthropological observation that gender is an emic taxonomy, specific to a single culture, and that in given cultures multiple genders are not unusual (Parker 2001, 320–4), some classicists entertain the hypothesis that a dualistic gender system common to the ancient Mediterranean world is a reductionist notion (Montserrat 2000; Golden and Toohey 2003). The conceptual, if not actual, existence of kinds of gender deviants—for example the Greek *kinaidos* and the Roman *cinaedus* and *tribas*—qualifies the polar opposition of male and female, verging (on the Roman side) upon the prospect of discrete third-gender forms (Winkler 1990, 45–70; Hallett 1997; Richlin 1993b; Williams 1999, 175–8, 209–15). Current research also interests itself in the cultural meanings of liminal figures

like the eunuch and the hermaphrodite and in the symptomatic fascination with monstrosity in late republican and imperial Rome.²² New work on cross-dressing as a literary and iconographic motif has expanded the symbolic implications of transvestitism well beyond its place in initiatory rites: while boundary-crossing behavior in ritual reinforces traditional sex roles, in art it may serve to undermine perceptions of a coherently gendered self (Gold 1998, 18; cf. Loreaux 1990 and Lee 2006). Attention to deviancy is an offshoot of a more general interest in exploring ancient constructions of manhood. To some extent men have replaced women as the primary object of theoretically oriented gender research, especially in Roman studies, where social historians focus upon technologies of elite masculine self-fashioning.²³ Because authentic masculinity was determined by external scrutiny, its perfect realization was impossible and its very stability as a concept was impaired. What counted as true manliness, *virtus*, changed from republic to empire and altered once more with the transition from paganism to Christianity (Kuefler 2001, 4–5; McDonnell 2006, 4–10). Since gender is relational, conceptions of womanhood shifted as well.

Enumerating at this point all the current intersections of ancient sexuality and feminism risks becoming superfluous. The emergence of queer theory as a new prism through which to view the evidence will be recounted in a separate chapter. Body history, another field tangential to gender studies, likewise requires no preliminary comment here, nor is it necessary to list the substantial contributions of feminist scholars to topics such as prostitution, female homoeroticism, or cult and religion, all of which will be treated in other chapters. On the other hand, the ideological confluence of eroticism and power deserves singling out as the most persistent focus of current feminist cultural analysis. In fifth-century Athens, as Wohl 2002 demonstrates, psychic investment in the democracy triggered a hankering for empire, and even fantasies of submission to the rapacious tyrant. Under the Roman Empire sex was “a way to talk about *imperium*” (Vuot 2007, 5): by musing upon the emperor's intimate relationships, subjects might be induced to assimilate him to divinity. Parallel case studies examine Greek use of the courtesan as icon or metaphor (Kurke 1999; McClure 2003; Gilhuly 2008) and Roman glorifications of maternal chastity (Milnor 2005; Langlands 2006). Finally, Gaca 2003 has continued Foucault's genealogical project by tracing the roots of Christian abhorrence of the flesh back to its pre-Christian sources. As scholarship on ancient sexuality enters its third full decade, a sophisticated fusion of psychoanalytic, discursive, and gender-oriented approaches is shedding light on aspects of antiquity previously uncharted, with intriguing and often

disquieting results.

Guide to Further Reading

Confirmation that the field of ancient sexuality has come of age is provided by two recent overviews aimed at students and the general reader. Skinner 2005 (revised second edition forthcoming in 2013) was designed for use in the undergraduate classroom, while Ormand 2009 should appeal to graduate students and researchers in other disciplines. McManus 1997 is an excellent history of feminist work in classical studies, summarizing both theoretical and practical findings. Case studies of feminist theoretical approaches to classical materials are contained in Rabinowitz and Richlin 1993. Halperin 1990 applies a Foucauldian perspective to aspects of classical Athenian culture while also tracing the development of modern notions of homosexual orientation. Winkler 1990 adds an anthropological dimension to Foucault's model of Greek sexual protocols. Richlin 1983 (revised second edition in 1992) is arguably the most influential feminist contribution to the study of Roman sexuality. Essays in Hallett and Skinner 1997 seek to differentiate specific aspects of Roman sexual mores from those prescribed by Greek culture. Williams 1999 (revised second edition in 2010) is a comprehensive study of ancient Roman ideologies of masculinity and their relationship to constructions of male homoerotic behaviors.

Notes

- 1 As do duBois 1998, 88–90 and Ormand 2009, 13–14.
- 2 Skinner 1996, conveniently on-line at <http://www.stoa.org/hopper/text.jsp?doc=Stoa:text:2002.01.0006>.
- 3 Quotation from Hitchcock 2008, 129. I borrow the phrase “citational politics” from Butler 1993, 21, who uses it in a far different sense; its aptness, however, should make up for any momentary confusion. “Citational politics” that appropriated feminist thought but suppressed credit for it was precisely the objection leveled by Richlin 1991 against Halperin 1990 and Winkler 1990.
- 4 On the epistemological limitations of a Nietzschean analysis that excludes the possibility of a truth outside power, see Taylor 1984, 175–80.

- 5 Early studies of the oppressive features of heterosexual institutions were Millett 1970, 23–58 and Firestone 1970. On the specific issues under attack, see Shulman 1980, 23–7.
- 6 For example Hallett 1977; Skinner 1979; Richlin 1981.
- 7 Specifically, articles by Griffin 1980 and Morgan 1980. Throughout Richlin's study the figure of Priapus, who threatens intruders into his garden with oral, anal, and vaginal assault, connects ancient symbolic structures with the present by subliminally recalling Morgan's slogan "Pornography is the theory and rape the practice."
- 8 See Kay's 1985 review of Richlin and Shapiro's 1986 evaluation of Keuls. Kay asserts that Richlin's "essential preoccupation with moral judgement" renders her approach "inapplicable" to classical philology (309), while Shapiro deplores Keuls' tone of "strident feminism" (363). Each pronouncement insinuates that the author in question has violated a basic rule of decorum. On appeals to taste and propriety as strategies of dismissal, see Halperin 1995, 131–3.
- 9 Boswell 1980, 61–87. The use of the term "homosexuality" in the title reflects the assumption, still current when the book was published, that ancient and modern sexual orientations were identical. Subsequently Boswell became a strong defender of that "essentialist" position against poststructuralist arguments that contemporary homosexuality is a discursive construct; e.g. Boswell 1990. For representative critiques of Boswell's ideas, see Halperin 1990, 18–19, 29, 46 and Goldhill 1995, 110.
- 10 Cohen and Saller 1994; Greene 1996; duBois 1998, 86–8; Richlin 1991, 1992a, xiv, 1998, and elsewhere; Foxhall 1998. Cf. de Lauretis 1987, 14–15 and 34–8, who notes that even sexuality as discussed in Foucault's volumes is exclusively male.
- 11 The four collections are those of Halperin 1990; Halperin, Winkler, and Zeitlin 1990; Konstan and Nussbaum 1990; and Winkler 1990. Representative chapters articulating a feminist perspective and employing gender as an analytic tool are Carson and Zeitlin in the Halperin, Winkler, and Zeitlin volume and Nugent and Stehle in the Konstan and Nussbaum special issue.
- 12 See Black 1998, 57–60; cf. Fox 1998, 18: "Foucault's methodology expressly excludes what the historian of gender is after: the sense of a self driven to expressing itself."
- 13 See the works of Janan 1994 and 2001 and of Miller 1998 and 2004.
- 14 Major studies include duBois 1988 on Greek metaphors for "woman"; Halperin 1990, 113–51 on Plato's Diotima; Nugent 1990 on the Ovidian hermaphrodite; and Gold 1993 on the place of

“Cynthia” in the elegies of Propertius.

15 As argued by Gordon 1986 and Poovey 1988; also compare the philosophical and epistemological critique of “gender-skepticism” by Bordo 1990. For a useful comparison between the assumptions of historians of women and those of historians of gender, with an attempt to reconcile the two approaches, see Newman 1991.

16 Kappeler's position on the representation of women in art (1986, 1–10) curiously dovetails with Halperin's observation (2002, 20) that the scholarly act of historical interpretation is itself a one-sided cultural appropriation and an expression of privilege.

17 Significant essays by this school of classicists are collected in Gordon 1981. For the fundamental role of polarity in Greek thought, see Lloyd 1966. The Pythagorean table of contraries described by Aristotle (Arist. *Met.* 986^a22–986^b1) is cited as exemplary for the place of gender in this conceptual system: see Vidal-Naquet 1981, 174–5.

18 Hallett 1989, 61–9 provides many further examples. On the implications of *virtus* when predicated of women, see McDonnell 2006, 161–5.

19 See especially the correlations traced by Halperin 1990, 24–38.

20 In contrast to the claim that pederasty was fully accepted, Hubbard 1998 and 2000 regards it as a social practice restricted to elites and finds evidence that the masses were hostile to it. Davidson 1997, 174–6 and 253–4, 2001, and 2007, 101–66 attacks current scholarly concentration upon the exploitative aspects of pederasty, arguing that the practice embraced a wide spectrum of erotic conduct, including egalitarian relations.

21 Compare Walters 1997, who outlines a conception of Roman male integrity “based on the notion of the invasion of the boundaries of the body, and in particular on the idea of the inviolability of personal space including and surrounding the body as marker of superior status” (41). Manhood is degraded not just by sexual submission but by any mode of physical encroachment.

22 For the eunuch, see Kuefler 2001, esp. 31–6, 96–102, and Ringrose 2003. In the popular mind the castrated male might stand outside the categories of gender (e.g. Val. Max. 7.7.6, where he is alleged to be “neither male nor female”). Hermaphrodites, subject to destruction as prodigies in earlier times, were recognized as persons under the empire; their condition was discussed by jurists (*Dig.* 1.5.10; 22.5.15.1 [Paulus]; 28.2.6.2 [Ulp.]) and by scientists (Plin. *HN* 7.3.34; 11.109.262). Gardner 1998 considers the legal capacity of physiologically inadequate males, noting problems created by the fact that the law itself admitted of no third sex (138).

On the artistic preoccupation with grotesque entities—a preoccupation seen as a compensatory mechanism for Roman anxieties—consult Barton (1993, 85–175); for the employment of outlandishness as a coherent ingredient in the rhetorical and ideological design of imperial biography, see Mader 2005.

23 The prime venue for proper display of masculinity was oratory, where rigorous conventions of authoritative posture, dress, gesture, and speech were observed; consult Richlin 1997 and Gunderson 2000. On the political message conveyed by the deliberate violation of such conventions, see Corbeill 2004, 133–7.

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Chapter 2

Studies of Ancient Masculinity

Mark Masterson

Introduction

When we study possessors of the male body in the ancient world and ancient masculinity, when we study ancient men as “men,” we call into question the assumption, widely extant in ancient sources, that man is synonymous with humanity *in toto*. On just this basis, the investigation of men as men (or whatever we want to define this area of inquiry—and there are live questions here that I will touch upon throughout this chapter) gives the scholar an opportunity to adopt a critical standpoint on ancient societies. This work, however, is by no means easy: deconstructing the universal and rendering marked the unmarked is hard work (Adams and Savran 2002: 2; Traister 2000: 281).

Born from gender studies in the final decades of the twentieth century, the academic study of masculinity is well established now. Readers interested in the genesis and subsequent history of masculinity studies should consult Adams and Savran (2002: 3–7; also Arnold and Brady 2011: 1–6 and Tosh 2011). In spite of its considerable development, the study of masculinity nonetheless can raise questions for political and methodological reasons. In the first place, a not infrequent characterization abroad in western culture of men themselves as victims (in addition to women and sexual minorities) of masculine gender has the tendency to curdle into a discourse of victimhood that sees feminism as an oppressor of men. This political reality can lead to misinterpreting the significance of studies of ancient masculinity, or even to rejecting them altogether. Another way in which masculinity studies can occasion questions for a reader is the all too frequent practice of presenting the norms of

ancient masculinity as the whole story about ancient men as men. The scholar relays what the norms were and believes that his or her work is done. This is incorrect. The work is half-done. I agree that it is essential to know what the ancients say about men and masculinity, but we should also feel free to consider dissidence from norms and what is not said. We should not take a model of reality distilled from ancient sources as if it were reality itself (see Gunderson 2003, 155; Fox 1998; Arnold and Brady 2011, 5). Do we want to allow ancient assertions about what “man” (*anēr* in Greek and *vir* in Latin) is to dictate the parameters of current investigations? Rather often (it pains me to say) there is too much deference granted to the sources in discussions of ancient manhood. Why this is so is difficult to say. Perhaps it is simply a result of the fact that explicit documentation is more comfortable and more easily defended than speculation; but for all this speculation is needed. To be direct and to prepare the way for remarks to come, I assert that an ideal approach to ancient masculinity will consider both norms and dissidence and will also envisage masculinity as a structure containing contradictions of various kinds. Such an approach is desirable because it endeavors to keep faith with what must have been the realities for actual ancient men; for it is not the case that persons live lives in perfect accord with norms.

I will divide the argument to come logically (if unsatisfactorily, for the division is crude). First there will be a discussion of Greece; I will start with remarks on Homer and then skip to the fifth and fourth centuries bce. After these remarks there will be a discussion of Rome, which begins with the republic and concludes with the early empire.

Greece

There is no place other than Homer to start. Whether we want to privilege Achilles (the star of the *Iliad*) or Odysseus (the *raison d'être* of the *Odyssey*) is ultimately a matter of taste. For all the differences between the two plots—the former is situated at Troy and is taken up with battles, whereas the latter features a journey undertaken by a man to reclaim his identity as a man, that is, as master of house and kingdom—both epics have similar perspectives on manhood. As I prefer the *Iliad* and find the intense homosociality of Achilles and Patroklos important and indicative, I will discuss Homeric notions using this poem for the most part.

In Book I, lines 488–92, we come upon Achilles after he has been bested by Agamemnon and faces the soon to be realized prospect of

surrendering Briseis, a woman who was his war prize (the following translation is my own, as are all in this chapter):

But that other one, Peleus' divinely born son, Achilles of the swift feet, sitting beside his fast ships, was cherishing his wrath. Never now would he go down to the gatherings of chief men that give glory to men, never more into battle, but he continued to eat his heart out staying there, though he kept longing for the battle-cry and fighting.

Here, early in the epic, we can see the elements of heroic manhood. And it is important to focus on Achilles, for he is a defining model for ancient men right through the whole of antiquity.

Achilles expresses his manhood through the physical acts of the warrior and through the maintenance of status in relation to peers, with whom he both cooperates and competes. Both physical abilities of body and excellence in speech are important for the acquisition of manly glory or *kudos* (and this is not possible for women). But these observations do not exhaust what we can take from the passage. A paradox is obviously present in Achilles' behavior. Achilles takes himself out of the running for the glory that will honor him as a man in order to preserve his honor in the eyes of other men. He cannot be seen to accept without protest Agamemnon's taking of his war prize. In order for him to follow his heart, he must eat it out, as it were. Furthermore—and the following exemplifies dynamics that recur throughout antiquity—tension attends the demands of the man *for himself* and the requirement for cooperation and interaction among men. Achilles must be distinctive, alone, and *the one*—even as this distinction needs the cooperation of other men (either as an audience, to hear his oratory at the gatherings of chiefs, or as victims, say, of his warrior prowess). He is to be glorious beyond other men; and yet, in their absence, he will be in danger of becoming a non-entity.

A recent study by Graziosi and Haubold (2003; and see also Bassi 2003) sees the presence of this tension between individual and group at a fine lexical level in words referring to manhood. We discover across both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* two words, *ēnoreē* and *agēnoriē*, which both have a close etymological relationship with the Greek word for man: *anēr*. While both words can be translated as “manliness,” it emerges that the latter, *agēnoriē*, can be regarded as a dangerous intensification of the former, *ēnoreē*: *agēnoriē* is excessive manliness that makes the hero transgress on the communal values he ought to be respecting. The Iliadic hero who is enthralled by *agēnoriē* is also quite likely to be isolated and acting in a reckless manner. Scholarly opinion has often privileged the singularity of the hero in the Homeric epics (for bibliography, see Graziosi and Haubold 2003).

But such an exclusive emphasis is not correct, and indeed this tension between singularity and community is present in both epics. In these early texts and in later evidence from antiquity we will discover manliness often being at odds with itself.

Another feature of manhood present in Homer, which we see throughout antiquity, is the sense that there has been a falling off from prior virtue. Agamemnon motivates Diomedes by observing, provocatively, that he is not the man his father Tydeus was (*Iliad* 4.370–400) and, in the *Odyssey*, Athena opines that sons generally don't equal their fathers (2.276–7). The present generation's degeneration creates nostalgia for manliness now lost. Old Nestor attempts to head off the escalating dispute between Agamemnon and Achilles:

in my time I have associated with men better than you are, and never once did they disdain me. For I have yet to see, nor am I going to see, such men like Perithoös, Dryas (shepherd of his people), Kaineus, Exadios, Polyphemos (like a god!), or Aigeus' son, Theseus (he, like one of the immortals!). They grew up strongest of the men on earth. They were the strongest and they fought the strongest: the mountain-bred centaurs. They annihilated them terribly. (*Iliad* 1.260–8)

Nestor accuses Achilles, of all men, of degeneracy; and the nostalgia for a manhood whose power has evidently passed from the world is present at the beginning of the tradition. As Bassi (1998) has demonstrated, this nostalgia for a departed masculine presence will be a constant feature of manhood in the centuries to come in the Greek world (and indeed will be present in Rome too). It is not too much to say that a frequent accompaniment of ancient manhood is the assertion that it is beleaguered somehow, or not present like it used to be.

Before moving forward to classical Greece, I note the warm homosociality of Achilles and Patroklos, which is part and parcel of Homeric manhood. Davidson (2007: 255–84) has shown that this closeness between the warriors, while seeming at first glance to be a singular occurrence, is actually paralleled elsewhere in Homer; they are not the only pair. As masculinity almost always has an ambivalence to same-sex sexual acts and the homosociality is so warm between Achilles and Patroklos, questions about a possible sexual component to their relation have been posed since very early days. As epic decorum almost always makes indirect depiction of sexual behavior (to say nothing of direct depiction) out of bounds, the Homeric text has been and will continue to be a playground for fantasies of androphilia, of homosexuality, of pederasty, and of male

bonding (understood cross-culturally by Halperin 1990: 75–87 through comparison with other bronze-age civilizations). The upshot is that this important aspect of the poem, which forms a significant counterbalance to the potential for masculine conflict, will never be sorted out to anyone's satisfaction as to what it meant at the time of the poem's composition. Later receptions of the poem, however, are a different matter. As male same-sex sexual behavior is handled elsewhere in this volume, I will not write further of it as regards Homer—beyond the following. While we cannot say for sure what is going on, what this iconic space that is the *Iliad* is *not* we can say for certain: it is not a space that can be seen to be utterly free of the atmospherics of homoerotics. A heterosexualization of the *Iliad* will never be convincing.

Moving forward in time to Athens of the fifth and fourth centuries bce, we acquire a new Greek word for manliness: *andreia* (Bassi 2003). In addition, as we leave the exclusive straight-jacketing of epic poetry for a fuller record, we also find more of daily life off the battlefield. Ideally, the *anēr* will be a loyal citizen who is publicly minded and not overly aggressive. He will also be a zealous guardian of his honor, control his appetites, be guided by reason, be truthful, produce children, and preserve his patrimony. The man who would fall short of a good masculinity is or does roughly the reverse of these things. He is outrageous in his actions and reactions (that is, hubristic), only concerned with himself, liable to give way to desire, and one to waste resources. The man whose manhood is defective can be assimilated to slaves and women (for more on Athenian manhood in general, see Fisher 1998 and Roisman 2005). Tensions along the lines of those seen in the epics continue, and they are showcased in the competition between the rhetors who were at the forefront of the democracy in Athens. The speeches from these rhetors (and other works too) show a bruising system of competition that has come to be seen, at times in problematic ways, as definitive of Athenian masculinity and male sexuality.

Throughout the fifth and fourth centuries, in Athens, the hoplite is frequently mentioned as a masculine ideal. Possessing his own armor, the hoplite fought in close comradesly formation for the fatherland. Already old-fashioned in the fifth century—the heyday of Athens' navy, which ruled the waves—this paragon of military virtue ultimately harkened back to the Iliadic warriors even as it did its best to tamp down anti-social impulses of manhood through its emphasis on good order and coordinated effort in battle. Significantly, a characteristic of the hoplite ideal was nostalgia. Winkler develops a contrast between the good hoplite and what he calls a “scare-image” and “anti-type of masculinity,” the *kinaidos* (1990: 46). In contrast to

the hoplite, the *kinaidos* was the soft man who wanted to lose, who couldn't control his appetites, who wanted to be sexually dominated and penetrated by other men. The hoplite/*kinaidos* dichotomy in turn functions as an illustration and summary image of Athenian manhood (and culture) as a thoroughgoing honor/shame system in which all competition is a zero-sum game: a winner gains honor quite precisely in proportion to another's shame. As Winkler's formulation has been influential (see Halperin 1990, too), I must engage with it here and, I fear, somewhat controversially. I owe much to Fox (1998) in the remarks to come.

To my mind, the honour/shame model is attractive if one has in mind Athenians thinking of the all but primal scene of Agamemnon's triumphant taking of Briseis, which directly puts proportional shame on Achilles. But the hoplite/*kinaidos* model shows critical overreach when it sexualizes the opposition between them (and it significantly departs from any kind of Homeric notion). While Winkler's characterization of the *kinaidos* in terms of a lack of control over appetites is fair enough, the sexualization of this figure in terms of passivity is a case not to be made on the basis of the evidence; and the word *kinaidos* is, at any rate, lightly attested (Fox 1998). The dichotomization of hoplite and *kinaidos* (as Winkler understands this figure) is a creature of current scholarship, and the excitement of anal penetration seemingly has nailed this particular model into place as the way to see Athenian manhood, even as the notion that anal penetration is the paradigmatic generator of shame is worth a question or two. It seems in fact that, as regards being penetrated, there was scope for maneuvering. For example, jokes about anal penetration appear on the Athenian stage that suggest that things were not as dire as the "all or nothing" suggested by the proposed exemplary hoplite/*kinaidos* dichotomy. On one occasion Aristophanes has a character brag that he removed an anally passive man from the rolls, and then he shows this character (the one who bragged) being accused of doing so because he was jealous of this man (*Knights* 877–80). Elsewhere Aristophanes has characters suggest that many of the men watching a play of his are devoted to playing the passive part in anal intercourse, for he calls them wide-arsed (*euruprōktoi*) repeatedly (*Clouds* 1083–104). If, keeping in mind this evidence, we take our estimation of Athenian male anxiety on this score down a peg or two, we will better see the cosmopolitan (and non-Homeric) component in the issue of honor and shame in the orators. A loss of honor may be tantamount to "getting fucked," but that may not be the end of the world even if it was not the goal.

The evidence from the orators shows a more nuanced situation around masculine honor in fourth-century Athens than a strict honor/

shame model would predict. An orator could at one moment appeal to honorable self-control as the mark of a real *anēr* who deserves the jury's vote, and yet at another time he could quite explicitly rely on a jury's understanding that all men have desires and that they sometimes give in to them (Roisman 2005). There were also conflicting norms around self-control in the face of a challenge to one's honor. A cosmopolitan insistence that a man surrender his self-defense to the law ("Let the laws defend your honor!") existed alongside the Homeric demand that an *anēr* himself must take all possible steps to defend his honor (Roisman 2005). Allowing the laws and rhetors to have the glory of defending one's honor, of which we have much evidence, does not fit at all well with the notion that the zero-sum dynamic of honor/shame was the only game in town. Self-perceptions of shameful dependency and feelings of not measuring up to the glorious examples of the past no doubt occurred, but the take-away is that life, as it always does, went on its inventive way, in excess of all the norms we may wish to identify.

Rome

The great empire, prior to its greatness, began as a beleaguered kingdom and then grew into an ambitious oligarchic republic. The conservatism of this aggressive and militarized society was marked until fairly late in the process of its becoming a world power. There was a fetishizing of the small farmer and good man who would not get above himself. The legend of Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus—the fifth-century farmer who, within the space of sixteen days, became dictator, defeated the enemy, and returned to his farm—is paradigmatic. Nostalgia around manhood was always strong in Rome, and the loving portraits of heroic figures from the salad days of the virtuous republic (and from the kingdom that preceded it) in the historiographer Livy's *Ab Urbe condita* (first century bce) constitute a late retelling of the stories the Romans had been telling themselves about their virtuous manhood for centuries. McDonnell (2006) draws attention to the word *virtus*, which is often translated (correctly) as "manliness." Although he occasionally over-insists on the meaning that *virtus* can have at any one time, McDonnell all the same presents a long-range dynamic for this important word that reflects the changes in Roman manhood as the small militarized republic develops into a long-lived and large empire.

The noun *virtus*, like any number of nouns in Latin, is difficult to translate. The word for man, *vir*, is obviously present within this word

(as was recognized in ancient times), so it is sensible to imagine that a connection to men was perceptible throughout Rome's history. McDonnell argues that *virtus* in the early to middle republic designated manhood or manliness as aggressive courage in martial endeavor. A stele for the consul Lucius Cornelius Scipio Barbatus (consul in 298 bce) places his manliness (*virtus*) in the emphatic last position in the listing of his qualities; and it is *virtus*, as military aggressiveness, that receives illustration in the last two lines:

Lucius Cornelius Scipio Barbatus
born of his father Gnaeus, a *vir* brave and wise
whose handsomeness equaled his *virtus*.
He was consul, censor, aedile among you.
He captured Taurasia, Cisauna in Samnium,
he subjugates all of Lucania and leads away hostages.

(CIL I² 6–7)

While lineage and the impressive list of offices he held certainly add sheen to his manliness, what we need to know most of all about this man's *virtus* or manliness is that he inflicted military defeat on Rome's enemies, as one third of the inscription is given over to his military exploits.

The powerful institution of patriarchal privilege, *patria potestas*, arguably intensified the channeling of manhood or *virtus* into things martial. According to *patria potestas*, a Roman man was in the power of his father until the latter's death; and this lack of autonomy meant that family and civilian life were not places where manly self-assertion could occur, even for men of considerable maturity. Indeed it is significant that it was customary to call Roman men young men or *iuvenes* until they were around 40 years old. It was rather in service to the state, in military endeavor, that a Roman man could demonstrate his manhood. Even though the bellicose republic honored enthusiasm for this role, this arena for *virtus* could be problematic on occasion. More than once we read of fathers in the early republic executing their own sons who, overly enthusiastic, dueled without permission (see, e.g., the story from the mid-fourth century bce of Titus Manlius Torquatus and his son: Livy, *Ab Urbe condita* 8.6.16–7.22).

With the conversion of the aggressive and successful state into a world power (and Lucius Cornelius Scipio Barbatus, consul at the beginning of the third century bce, lived close to the beginning of this change), riches and increasing exposure to the highly developed cultural productions of Greece made the rough republic more cosmopolitan. We can track changes in thoughts about manliness in the developing definition of *virtus* (as McDonnell also shows us). Instead of denoting military endeavor on behalf of the state alone,

virtus now denotes that and more, as it comes to embody probity and communal values as well. These excerpts from one of the fragments of the late second-century bce satirist Gaius Lucilius show this shift in meaning:

virtus [is] to know what is right, useful and honorable for a man; what things are good and, likewise, what things are bad; what is useless, shameful, dishonorable ...*virtus* in its very essence means giving that which is owed to honor ...regarding the interests of the fatherland first, those of parents next, and third and last our own. (*Incertae sedis reliquiae* 1329–38 Marx)

Virtus is coming to place a larger emphasis, then, on self-control and a lighter one on bodily feats on the battlefield, which may be difficult to control. These changes were not the only ones, however. *Virtus* also comes to designate the power and excellence of all manner of things. Germanicus Julius Caesar, who was for a time heir to the second Roman emperor, Tiberius, attributes *virtus* to the stars in his *Aratea* (which is a translation of Aratos' Greek astrological poem, *Phaenomena*): “nor are the stars able, if the moon interferes, to shine through their own *virtus*” (229–30). At 9.1.13 in the *Controversiae* (a work that consists of memorializing transcriptions of the performance of able speakers and, significantly, was written for pedagogical purposes), Seneca the Elder, writing at the end of the first century bce, praises the historian Thucydides for his conciseness (*brevitas*), which he calls a *virtus*. Rainwater is to be collected because it is purer and has healthier *virtutes* (*virtutes* is the plural of *virtus*) according to the first-century bce writer Vitruvius in his *De architectura* (8.2.1). The glamour of achieved manhood having come to suffuse the physical world is one way to look at these extensions of meaning for *virtus*.

With the embrace of a more civilian mode of manhood came new styles of competition and aggressiveness. Skill in verbal battling assumed greater importance, and office holding was more important than ever. With these changes in the terms and benchmarks of manly accomplishment, there commences, not surprisingly, debate about masculinity. We read of questions about the present way of doing things and of nostalgia for the past. Plutarch (late first–early second century ce), for example, reports that the arrival of the philosopher Carneades (from the skeptical Old Academy) in the mid-second century bce excited the young men of Rome and made the Roman statesman and writer Cato the Elder anxious (*Life of Cato the Elder* 22.1–5). Cato worried that the youth would value skill in speaking over glory won through arms. We surely can associate these concerns with the expulsion of teachers of rhetoric from Rome in the mid-second and again in the first century bce (they returned almost

immediately both times).

We also witness, in the late republic and going forward into the empire, the appearance of rhetorical treatises. Gleason (1995; and compare Richlin 1997) has argued persuasively that these treatises have a key concern in the making of men out of boys. Much is made of gestures and the use of the voice: a constant refrain, implicit and explicit, is that gestures and voice are to be carefully cultivated so as to convey a natural masculinity. The irony of embracing artifice to reveal a natural manhood was productive of anxiety; was the elite man a little too much of an actor (Gleason 1995, Richlin 1997, Gunderson 2000, Connolly 2003)? Quintilian, the author of the magisterial rhetorical treatise of the late first century ce, *Institutio oratoria*, nicely encapsulates the tension between past and present and the need for the good man to be careful of the artifice that he nonetheless must affect:

...a rather more excited mode of speaking has been adopted and is in favor (and it is suitable for some tasks). Nevertheless, care should be taken so that, while we strive for an actor's elegance, we don't lose the authority of the good and serious *vir*. (Quint., *Inst.* 11.3.184)

Gleason also asserts that treatises such as the *Institutio oratoria* or the anonymous *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (first century bce) were written because there was an actual loss of masculine authenticity, that these handbooks of rhetoric came into existence because masculine enculturation was not functioning properly and required these textual aids (1995: xxv). In agreement with Gunderson (2000: 12), I think this is not correct and the reality was more complicated. As noted above, there were changes in the expression of Roman manhood; it had become more cosmopolitan. A more compelling way to understand the appearance of the treatises is to regard it as evidence of an adaptive strategy in the face of these changes. Also, we do well to remember that, going all the way back to the *Iliad* and then forward, we can find assertions to the effect that the present generation has failed to meet the standards set by previous ones. Indeed, when confronted with assertions about the degeneracy of the current generation, we should think about them in terms of nostalgia (e.g., Bassi 1998), and also of the inherent difficulty of ever approximating any gender role, especially and emphatically that of masculinity (Gunderson 2000). We should also view in this light the suspicion of things Greek, which coincides, all the same, with their adoption. Rather than arguing over whether *the* Roman attitude was acceptance or rejection, we are better off thinking of nostalgia and status anxiety rendering the brave new world of empire full of

alarming novelties that, in turn, demand action.

Amid these changes, however, we see bodily performance remaining important through a continuing emphasis on phallicism: a mark of the *vir* is a propensity to penetrate others sexually. Scholars (see, e.g., Williams 1999, Parker 1997, Walters 1997a, Richlin 1992) make reference to what is frequently called, in this secondary literature, the “priapic model.” Named after a minor deity, Priapus, whose notable feature was an outsize phallus, the priapic model is a protocol of penetration that describes a Roman *vir* as an impenetrable and enthusiastic penetrator of others: women, boys, and *cinaedi*. I note here briefly the *cinaedi* (singular *cinaedus*; cf. Greek *kinaidos*). Described as interested in allowing penetration and oftentimes in adopting feminine modes of dress, *cinaedi* are adult males who fail of a masculinity defined in accordance with the norms. I shall not say more about them here, as they are discussed elsewhere in this volume. Returning to the *vir*, we see approbation in the sources for the man who would penetrate. For example, poetry of the late republic and early empire displays an assertion of manhood made in a bodily way, which runs athwart both the moralization of *virtus* we saw exemplified above, in the quotation from Lucilius, and the increasing cosmopolitanism of Rome. The poet Catullus (first century bce), when faced with accusations (so he tells us) that he is less than manly because of his luxuriating and swooning love poetry, rebuts these insinuations in Poem 16 by threatening oral and anal rape of his male critics. The poet Martial (first to second century ce) underscores the masculinity of his poetic persona by emphasizing his shaggy chest and by threatening anal rape of another male in Poem 65 of Book 10 of his epigrams—just as Catullus had done. The possible victim of rape is derided as smooth and as less of a man. Of course, such posturing should to some extent be seen as metaphoric of the poet’s claim to poetic mastery. But the metaphor would not hold a charge if it were not of a piece with the stigmatization of men who demurred when they should penetrate and preferred to be penetrated in sexual acts. And this was not only about stigma: being sexually passive could bring about legal disabilities too (Richlin 1993). This revelation of the continuing importance of the physical, and indeed of the valorization of priapic behavior and disapproval of and penalties for sexual passivity among free *vir*i, should not be the end of the discussion, however. This stigmatizing and legislating also reveal anxiety and suggest the presence of conflict on this question, and hence an embargo on what was known at some level to be pleasurable. Let me develop this point.

Substantially expanding on earlier analysis by Walters (1997b), Gunderson (2003) finds the third declamation of pseudo-Quintilian a

place in which we can glimpse the forbidden desire of an adult Roman man for another man. This declamation (a piece of practice rhetoric suitable, significantly, for pedagogical purposes), even though written in the first century ce, is set dramatically in the opening decades of the first century bce. It concerns a military tribune who was a relative of the gruff Roman dictator Marius. The tribune, relying on his connections with the dictator, tried to force a manly soldier to submit to sexual penetration. Rather than give in, the soldier killed the tribune. The declamation is a lengthy defense of the soldier and is imagined as being delivered to Marius himself. The arguments put forward in this work of fantasy (and this is not the only time that this plot emerges in the record: the story goes by the title “Miles Marianus” or “Marius' Soldier”) feature stagey fretting about the loss of masculine chastity and double-entendres, all of which constantly bring to mind, in a strong visualization, the sexual violation that did *not* occur. From the contortions of this declamation we draw the conclusion that a Roman man, as a manly man and soldier, could be the object of masculine same-sex desire. Even though an “impenetrable penetrator” is not supposed to interest other men in this way, the existence of this story suggests otherwise. Indeed another plausible point to draw from this work is that it was known that being penetrated could be productive of pleasure. Did the soldier have to kill Marius' relative because he knew it was possible that someone could believe that he might find such a thing pleasant?

The notion of one man penetrating another could also occasion humor. In Seneca the Elder's *Controversiae* (a work mentioned above), the orator Haterius is sometimes too effortful in his productions. He notoriously overshot the mark, as it were, in an effort to make a neat symmetrical point in defense of a freedman (a man who had been a slave but was now free). The freedman was accused of being the bedmate of his patron (and former owner), and his words became an object of fun among other men for some time afterwards. Seneca remarks:

I remember him [Haterius], when he was defending a freedman who had been accused of being his patron's beloved, saying the following: “Unchastity is a crime for a free-born person, in a slave a necessity, and in a freedman a duty.” The thing became a springboard to frivolous humor. [Other men, joking around, were saying things similar to the following:] “You are not doing your *duty* by me.” “He is much involved *in duties* for him.” Since that time the unchaste and the obscene are sometimes termed *dutiful*. (Sen., *Controv.* 4, Prologue 10)

The bending of the Latin word for duty (*officium*) and its

derivatives into a term for allowing penetration does not lack in similarities with the elaborate staging of the story of the soldier who murdered to protect his chastity. In both cases it is a matter of men's desire to return to a story of manly chastity, either defiled or under threat to be defiled. In each instance, the return is terminated by the disavowal of cutting humor or of murder, which makes the evidently entrancing object go away until it is time for it to return again. Gunderson remarks as follows of this scene from the *Controversiae*:

the joke about *officium* may seem to be a hostile barb made at the expense of the passive male, but the energy subtending the laughter is not to be found in the simple desire to mock another. Rather it is precisely the idea that sexual relations between two adult males are a censored category of libidinal activity that produces the frustration that then fuels the hostility. Accordingly that which remains unacknowledged amidst the laughter is the existence of a libido that in fact would like to entertain the possibility of such unions in an uncensored manner. (Gunderson 2003: 235)

On the basis of these dynamics of joking about passivity and of grim murder in chastity's defense, we do well to view Roman men's lives as rather more complicated in regard to sexual behavior than the priapic model would lead us to believe. The model is one thing and reality another (cf. Gunderson 2003: 155). I will now conclude this section on Rome with some representations from the early empire (first and second centuries ce) that showcase the coexistence of soldierly aggressiveness with luxuriating cosmopolitanism, a combination that is the hallmark of elite manhood in the empire.

At the conclusion of his *Punica*, a massive heroic epic that narrates the war against Hannibal at the end of the second century bce and is peppered with nostalgic asides, Silius Italicus gave his first-century ce readers a close-up of Scipio Africanus, the savior of Rome, as he celebrates his triumph. This singular hero, who is an example for all other good Roman men, is a suitable figure to appear close to the end of this piece on manhood in the ancient world that started with Achilles, the one who is the model for them all:

The very one, Scipio, standing erect in his chariot and resplendent in gold and purple was offering the countenance of Mars to the Romans for gazing. So Bacchus appeared when he, making his descent from incense-breathing India, drove his chariot wreathed with grape leaves and drawn by tigers; so Hercules appeared when he, touching the stars, strode upon Phlegraean fields (the massive labor of the Giants completed). Hail, unconquered father ...! (Sil. *Pun.* 17.645–51)

We see the hero compared to two sons of Jupiter (Bacchus and

Hercules), appropriately inasmuch as one of the conceits of the poem is that Scipio is also a son of the king of heaven. The two similes, coming after and explaining the spectacle of martial countenance that Scipio offers his fellow citizens, invite analysis. In the first one this martial epiphany is explained by reference to Bacchus, whom Hellenistic kings often chose as a divine exemplar. In a Roman context, though, Bacchus was not a simple model; his pleasure in unmasculine passivities of all kinds was well known and his nature will on occasion, in centuries to come, be the object of gleeful Christian exposés (see, e.g., Arnobius, *Contra gentes* 5.28.1–8 for a highly explicit and memorable instance from the early fourth century ce). Silius then compares Scipio to Hercules in the moments after he helped the gods defeat the giants and secure the kingship of heaven. Famously hypermasculine, Hercules functions as a counterweight to Bacchus. All the same, however, his cross-dressing during his servitude to Queen Omphale was well known, and hence the complexities of his image, combined with the martial styling of Bacchus (just back from campaign himself), make the two gods into metaphors for each other—as well as for Scipio. My point here is that the powerful *vir* who would have had *virtus* chiseled on his grave stele in republican days becomes grander in later times through comparison to the gods and also comes to have a more complicated relationship with gender performance. Roman manhood, on this basis, is not a simple thing at all. The priapic assertion that looms so large in scholarly analyses shares the stage with imperfectly acknowledged counterdiscourses of indulgence in passivities of all kinds.

A reader may also want to consider the second poem from Book 4 of Statius' *Silvae* (a set of shorter poems on various topics, written in the late first century ce). Although lighter in tone than an epic like the *Punica*, the *Silvae* all the same maintain substantive connections to important political personages and issues. At *Silvae* 4.2, lines 46–51, Statius compares the Emperor Domitian, in rapid succession, to the god Mars (gruff masculinity), to Pollux (20-year-old, let's say, and athletic), and, as did Silius for Scipio, to Bacchus and Hercules:

No differently [from what do you, Domitian,] does Mars recline in the chill valley of Rhodope when he has unyoked his steeds; thus Pollux lays down his well-oiled limbs, at his ease after the Therapnaean wrestling match; thus does Bacchus sprawl by the Ganges while the Indians make their effeminate racket; thus does grim Hercules, back from his terrible labors, rejoice to stretch out his side on his lion skin, which he has spread out.

The emperor at his ease is many things at once (grim warrior god, a half-god just now mature, the luxuriating god of wine, and a

hypermasculine demi-god) and more multiplex than Silius' Scipio. While I don't expect us to take what Silius and Statius say as perfectly reflective of Roman manhood in the late first century ce, we should note two things. We must, first, register the distance between this kind of speech about a leader then and what might be said about a leader in the modern West now; and, second, we must keep in mind that elite manhood in the early empire sports a profile similar enough to the one just seen.

Aulus Gellius (second century ce; *Attic Nights* 19.9.7–10) discusses his teacher Antonius Julianus, who defends Latin literature against imputations from some Greek intellectuals that it is the work of philistine boors. At first angry, Julianus accuses the Greeks of effeminacy, but he then covers his head, as Socrates did in the *Phaedrus* (237A) when he undertook to outdo Lysias' scandalous speech of the non-lover and thereby speak shameful erotic things. Compelling his Greek audience to read him as Socrates, Julianus then “presses on” to victory through leaning back and singing:

Then, lying back with his head veiled, he [Julianus] sang, in an exceedingly sweet voice, verses of Valerius Aedituus, the old poet, and those too of Porcius Licinius and Quintus Catulus. I reckon that nothing at all can be found, in Greek or in Latin, more refined, more lovely, more polished, or more concise. (*Attic Nights* 19.9.10)

Initially aggressive when challenged and with that side to him revealed, Julianus changes tack and adopts a luxuriant pose, which is the fruit of the cosmopolitanism that empire has brought, and in this way he vanquishes his enemies: he “rise[s], or rather recline[s], to the defense of himself and the entire *nomen Latinum*” (Wray 2001: 214).

Conclusion

If we think generally of ancient manhood, we will note that it was a structure elaborated in a dichotomous relationship with femininity and, as it was regarded as an attribute of elites, it was also in dichotomous relationships with servility and foreignness. Ancient manhood was also marked by an interest in the excellence of the male body and an indicative connection to soldierly endeavor, both literally and metaphorically (e.g., by competition in situations requiring verbal excellence). Ancient manhood also had a demonstrable relationship with nostalgia. From the very beginning of the textual record, we read of concerns that the current generation is decadent in relation to previous generations. Furthermore, the evidence of Rome suggests

that, as societies became more settled, masculinity would, in its definition, come to designate more settled virtues that have some distance from the rough and tumble of battle. Accordingly, *virtus* (manliness) is reasonably translated with “virtue,” “excellence,” or similar terms on occasion. Lastly, throughout its history, ancient manhood had a complicated relationship with homoerotics and with ideals of self-control. Analysis of the reception of the *Iliad* and careful consideration of possible (obscured) motivations for writing a declamation on the attempted rape of a soldier suggest ambivalence and conflict around same-sex desire. As the portraits of Scipio and Domitian show, notions of self-control and mastery of others, while important, are nonetheless undercut in high-status productions, and this undercutting suggests ambivalence and the existence of other perspectives.

Guide to Further Reading

Readers interested in reading further about ancient masculinity can of course consult sources referred to in this chapter. There have been three excellent edited volumes that cover masculinity in Greece and Rome: Foxhall and Salmon (1998a and 1998b) and Rosen and Sluiter (2003). For Greece alone, Winkler (1990) and Halperin (1990) are both valuable but display rigidity at times. For his sensitivity to the limitations of normative language, Fox (1998; cf. Davidson 2001) should be read with Winkler. Bassi (1998) presents a compelling account of the inter-implication of manhood, epic, tragedy, and the democracy of Athens. Roisman's careful presentation (2005) of manhood among the orators is consistently enlightening. For Rome, McDonnell (2006) delineates changes in Roman manhood from the republic to the beginning of the empire. Gleason (1995) provides a classic account of manhood in the empire. Gunderson's two monographs (2000, 2003) are challenging but are models of readings that reveal hidden motivations and fixations. Richlin (1997) provides an excellent account of the connection between Roman manhood and education; Williams (1999, 2010) discusses Roman masculinity and homosexual behavior across a wide array of Latin and Greek sources. Wray (2001) provides an agile discussion of manhood in the important poet of the late republic, Catullus. An area that I did not cover above but that is of great intrinsic interest is late antiquity. Kuefler (2001) and Burrus (2000) take as their topic the transformation of late Roman manhood through its encounter with Christianity. My forthcoming monograph considers homosociality and

same-sex desire among late ancient elite men of the fourth- and fifth-century empire.

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Chapter 3

Desirability and the Body

Mark D. Stansbury-O'Donnell

The phrase “beauty is in the eye of the beholder” is usually invoked to explain the attractiveness of someone who may not meet a prevailing cultural standard of beauty. It is apt, however, for framing a discussion of art, beauty, and desire in Greece and Rome, since understanding the effect of beauty depends upon the perspective and approach that one takes. Does one try to define a beautiful body as an aesthetic universal, something recognized by the “man of taste,” to borrow an expression from Kant? Does one look at the artist, the art object, or the viewer? While critic, artist, and viewer might use the term “beauty” for a work of art, their point of reference is different, and their response to the work, particularly in their admiration and desire, differ. Here we will consider beauty from two perspectives, that of the artist making a figural work of art and that of the viewer looking at it. In each case literary evidence will assist us in identifying some of the interests that these two observers of beauty had.

Artists and the Ideal Human Figure

We can begin by looking at a work that was recognized throughout antiquity as an ideal rendering of the human body, the *Doryphoros* (“*The Spear-Bearer*”: [Figure 3.1](#)). The original bronze statue was created by Polykleitos around 450–440 bce for the city of Argos. Today the work is known from several full-size copies in marble dating from the Hellenistic and Roman eras, as well as from busts and other replicas. The nude male figure is shown in a contrapposto pose, with the weight on the right leg. With the heel raised on the free left

leg, the figure is balanced between motion and rest, either starting to move or coming to a stop. The work has a chiastic or X-shape composition, with the weight-bearing arm and leg diagonally opposite from each other, the hips tilted down on the left and the shoulders down on the right. The figure is neither youthful nor old, is well developed but not overly so. In summary, it is an idealized figure that the first-century rhetorician Quintilian described as “suitable both for the military and for the wrestling-court” (*Institutio oratoria* 5.12.21; in Pollitt 1990, 77).

Figure 3.1 Doryphoros of Polykleitos. Hellenistic copy of Greek original (c. 450–440 bce).

Source: Minneapolis Institute of Arts, The John R. Van Derlip Fund and Gift of funds from Bruce B. Dayton, an anonymous donor, Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Dayton, Mr. and Mrs. W. John Driscoll, Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Harrison, Mr. and Mrs. John Andrus, Mr. and Mrs. Judson Dayton, Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Keating, Mr. and Mrs. Pierce McNally, Mr. and Mrs. Donald Dayton, Mr. and Mrs. Wayne MacFarlane, and many other generous friends of the Institute.



The statue graces most textbooks on the history of Greek art and was equally famous in antiquity. Quintilian as well as Cicero tell us that Lysippos and other ancient sculptors used the *Doryphoros* as the model for their work (Cicero, *Brutus* 296). They suggest that the statue is the same as the one called the *Canon*, which was a demonstration of the principles of design that Polykleitos described in a treatise of the same name. Galen, the famous doctor who lived in the late second century ce and into the third (d. c. 216 ce), tells us further about the status of the *Canon* and its relationship to ideal beauty:

Modelers and sculptors and painters, and in fact image-makers in general, paint or model figures by observing an ideal form in each case, that is, whatever form is most beautiful in man or in the horse or in the cow or in the lion, always looking for the mean within each genus. And a certain statue might perhaps also be commended, the one called the *Canon* of Polykleitos; it got such a name from having precise commensurability [*symmetria*] of all the parts to one another. (Galen, *De temperamentis* 1.9; in Pollitt 1990, 76–7)

The Greek term *symmetria*, which translates as commensurability or proportion—the appropriate relationship and proportions between the parts of a work—was a key component of Polykleitos' work. Elsewhere Galen tells us that the beauty of the *Canon/Doryphoros* was the result of its use of numerical proportions to determine the composition of the ideal body:

Beauty [*kallos*], he [Chrysippos] believes, arises not in the commensurability [*symmetria*] of the constituent elements [of the body], but in the commensurability of the parts, such as that of finger to finger, and of all the fingers to the palm and the wrist, and of these to the forearm, and of the forearm to the upper arm, and, in fact, of everything to everything else, just as it is written in the *Canon* of Polykleitos. For having taught us in that work all the proportions of the body, Polykleitos supported his treatise with a work of art; that is, he made a statue according to the tenets of his treatise, and called the statue, like the work, the *Canon*. (Galen, *De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis* [= *On the Opinions of Hippocrates and Plato*] 5; in Pollitt 1990, 76)

While we have lost the details of the system, it is thought that numerical ratios, like those that represented harmonic intervals in music (1:2, 2:3, 3:4, and so on), were integral to this system.

While sketchy, Galen's testimony points to the importance of proportion, particularly a set of idealized numerical ratios, as fundamental to artistic beauty. This was not new with Polykleitos, as Greek artists had been using proportional systems to create works since the geometric period. During the archaic period, the standing male nude statue—the *kouros* (“adolescent/young man”)—had become a standard of Greek art, as can be seen in the figures of Kleobis and Biton found at Delphi (see [Figure 3.2](#)). Made about 150 years before the *Doryphoros*, they show little of the mimetic qualities of movement and anatomy found in the *Doryphoros*. The two statues are, however, almost identical in their proportions and features, showing the use of a system in their design not unlike the canon of proportions and grid used by Egyptian sculptors. According to Herodotus (1.31), the figures were set up in honor of two brothers who, in an act of pious devotion,

pulled the cart of their mother to the sanctuary of Argive Hera so that she could participate in the ritual ceremonies at the temple. The mother prayed to the goddess to reward her sons, who lay sleeping, and the prayer was answered with their death at the apex of their piety and prowess. The statues are not true individualized portraits, but, like the *Doryphoros*, they represent the pinnacle of male beauty and strength. The *kouros* was a standard expression of male beauty throughout the archaic period, but there is a great deal of variation in proportions and naturalistic detail among various *kouroi*.

Figure 3.2 Kleobis and Biton (c. 590 bce).

Source: Delphi Archaeological Museum. Scala / Art Resource, NY.



Another fundamental element to the Polykleitan canon was its reliance on the concept of the mean or balance. The figure is controlled and balanced between opposite values, such as motion and rest, bent and straight lines, youth and adult, right and left. This idea of equilibrium also was a feature of the philosophy of Pythagoras, and it is thought that Polykleitos was the follower of this semi-legendary figure. While later sculptors might alter some of the numerical proportions, the Polykleitan system of *symmetria* and balance created an enduring standard of beauty for artists.

One criticism that ancient writers made of Polykleitos was that his work did not capture the weightiness (*pondus*) or majesty (*maiestas*) of the gods (Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 12.10.9). This was achieved by Polykleitos' contemporary Pheidias, who is best known for his monumental ivory and gold statues of Athena in the Parthenon at Athens and of Zeus at Olympia. Indeed, beauty and majesty (*kallos* and *megethos*) are linked frequently as terms describing the work of Pheidias, suggesting that beauty and character were linked too (Pollitt 1974, 193). Unfortunately we do not have a good idea about the form of Pheidias' work, although the Parthenon sculptures, particularly the frieze, probably reflect something of his style.

What may be called the female canon was established in the mid-fourth century bce by Praxiteles, who created a statue of Aphrodite for the island of Knidos (see [Figure 3.3](#)). According to Pliny the Elder, the statue was superior to all others and was a popular tourist destination in the ancient world. He further tells us that in his day (first century ce) “its shrine is completely open, so that it is possible to observe the image of the goddess from every side; she herself, it is believed, favored its being made that way. Nor is one's admiration of the statue less from any side” (*Naturalis historia* 36.20; in Pollitt 1990, 84). Like the *Doryphoros*, the work is known only through copies, but from these we can tell that the figure was nude and in a contrapposto pose, with her head turned to her left while she was picking up a cloth that hangs over a water pitcher. The variation in the position of the turned head among the reproductions and the uncertainty as to whether the figure looks forward or slightly down make it difficult, however, to be precise about the original. The versions in Munich (this is the one in [Figure 3.3](#)) and in the Vatican are generally regarded as closest to the original.

Figure 3.3 Aphrodite of Knidos of Praxiteles. Roman copy or adaptation of Greek original (c. 350 bce).

Source: Staatliche Antikensammlungen und Glyptothek München. Photo: Renate Kühling.



As in much of the late classical sculpture, the modeling of the skin and muscles are softer than in the *Doryphoros*—an impression that was likely enhanced when the statue was originally painted. The braided and parted hair offers a texture contrasting to that of the skin of the face, and the eyes are softer. Curiously, neither her pubic hair nor her genitals are indicated in any of the copies or adaptations. Her body type, and particularly her head, became standards of beauty in later Hellenistic and Roman art. Lucian, a second-century ce writer, recommends, for a statue of the emperor's mistress, using the head of

the Knidian Aphrodite: “the area around the hair and the forehead and also the neat line of the eyebrows he shall let her have just as Praxiteles made them; likewise the dewy quality of the eyes with their joyous radiance and welcoming look ...” (*Imagines* 6; in Pollitt 1990, 86). The large number of copies of the work, far larger than that of copies of the *Doryphoros*, as well as the many adaptations of the pose and the head, testify to its visual appeal. Judging from the sources, the ideal here is not expressed so much through number or *symmetria* as through a visualization of the invisible, divine form of the goddess' beauty—and this is done so well that several epigrams about the statue have Aphrodite ask: “Where did Praxiteles see me naked?” (epigram spuriously attributed to Plato, *Anthologia Palatina* 16.160; in Pollitt 1990, 86).

Pliny tells us that Praxiteles actually made two statues of Aphrodite, one clothed and one nude, and offered the initial choice of work to the people of the island of Kos, who selected the clothed version, leaving the nude version for Knidos. While the historicity of this tale is uncertain, the tale itself does convey the radical innovation of Praxiteles, which consisted in making a monumental female statue fully nude. Unlike the male figure, which had been shown nude since the eighth century bce, female figures were in clothed form, like the *korē* (or, in Dorian dialect, *kōra*; plural *korai*) statues of the archaic period (see [Figure 3.4](#)); this gave the figures a modesty that was expected of women in public. Like the *kouros* (see [Figure 3.2](#)), these were idealized representations, showing young women in elaborate dress, as if they were participating in a religious festival. The variety of costumes, poses, and proportions suggests that there was not a rigid standardization of form, and the drapery around the figures can cling to and reveal the curves of the body underneath.

Figure 3.4 Kore from the Acropolis (c. 510 bce).

Source: Athens, Akropolis Museum 672. Marie Mauzy / Art Resource, NY.



That nudity was an issue for female beauty, even for the Knidian Aphrodite, is seen in her gestures: the right arm is reaching to cover her pubis while the left hand grabs her garment. It is argued that these gestures indicate she has been disturbed in her bath, is subjected to the gaze of the male viewer, and covers herself in a suggestion of *aidōs*—a feeling usually rendered as “modesty” or “shame.” A more fruitful way of thinking about the role of modesty in relation to beauty and nudity might be to consider that a nude young man was also expected to show modesty by averting his gaze from onlookers. When an athletic victor was crowned, he was expected to lower his gaze and not to engage in direct eye contact with the spectators. Even though

he competed and practiced in the nude, these actions framed the context of male nudity and made the latter appropriate for a public venue. The *Doryphoros*, as we noted before, was appropriate either for an athletic venue or as a military monument, both situations calling for a heroic, idealized figure to represent the action of the person being commemorated. In other words nudity was considered as integral to the body's action, and it represented the *ēthos* of the figure. This ethical dimension of the ideal figure should be considered as a key component of beauty. As Simon Goldhill has noted in discussing Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, art was considered useful to the ancient city if it represented what is ethical (Goldhill 1998, 111). Returning to female nudity, the Knidian Aphrodite's nudity is given a context in that, on her journey from Cyprus by sea, the goddess washed herself at Knidos, and so she is appropriately shown nude in her bath.

Praxiteles was not the first artist to address the problem of portraying a nude female figure. In the late fifth or early fourth century bce, Zeuxis was commissioned to paint an image for the sanctuary of Hera at Croton. According to Cicero, Zeuxis wanted his image to “contain within itself the preeminent beauty of the feminine form” and proposed to show Helen as a kneeling, nude bather (*De inventione rhetorica* 2.1.1; in Pollitt 1990, 151). This original has been lost, but Robert Sutton proposes that the painting of Zeuxis is the model for the appearance, on some vase paintings from the late fifth and fourth centuries, of a kneeling bather that is sometimes identifiable as Helen and sometimes as a *nymphē*—a word that signifies both “nymph” and “bride” (Figure 3.5; Sutton 2009). As Sutton points out, the literary sources tell us that Zeuxis persuaded the town's council to allow him to use five of the town's maidens as nude models, combining their best features to create an idealized representation of female beauty. A public decree was passed to make this possible, which suggests that female nudity could be acceptable for a public purpose and therefore did not automatically bring shame. The success of Zeuxis' conception of female beauty might be seen in the proliferation of statues of Aphrodite crouched in the bath in late Hellenistic and Roman art (Figure 3.6). Although the pose varies from that of the Knidian Aphrodite, the proportions, modeling, surface, and subject's absorption in the task are similar.

Figure 3.5 Lekythos with Crouching Bather in the manner of the Meidias Painter (late fifth century bce).

Source: F2707. bpk, Berlin / Antikensammlung / Art Resource, NY.



Figure 3.6 Bathing Aphrodite (second century ce).

Source: Rome, Museo Nazionale. Scala / Ministero per i Beni e le Attività culturali / Art Resource, NY.



Praxiteles is said to have used his mistress Phryne, renowned for her beauty, as the model for the Knidian Aphrodite, as Athenaeus (or rather his source) recounts in his huge compilation *Deipnosophistae* (*Philosophers at Dinner*), probably dating from the third century ce:

[Phryne] in the festival of the Eleusians and in the festival of Poseidon took off her robes in view of all the Greeks, unbound her hair and went into the sea. It was with her as a model that Apelles painted his Aphrodite Anadyomene. And Praxiteles the sculptor, falling in love with her, made his Knidian Aphrodite with her as the

model. (Ath. 13.590; in Pollitt 1990, 86)

Interestingly, our sources stress the role of actual human models for Zeuxis and Praxiteles in visualizing female beauty, while no such testimony is connected with the *Doryphoros*.

Beauty, Desire, and the Viewer

We can return again to the Knidian Aphrodite, to exchange the point of view of the artist with that of the viewer (as mentioned in the beginning). In the *Amores*, a work attributed to Lucian but thought by some to be of a later date, the author describes a visit he made to Knidos in the company of his friends Charikles and Kallikratidas to see the Aphrodite of Praxiteles. The description of the statue generally matches Pliny's account partly quoted above (*NH* 36.20–1), but there are differences in the setting—both from Pliny and from the results of the excavation of the archaeological site (Love 1972). The psychological experience of the three friends is, however, worth considering at some length:

When we had exhausted the charms of these places we pressed on into the temple itself. The goddess stands in the center; her statue fashioned of Parian marble. Her lips are slightly parted in a lofty smile. Nothing hides her beauty, which is entirely exposed, other than a furtive hand veiling her modesty. The art of the sculptor has succeeded so well that it seems the marble has shed its hardness to mold the grace of her limbs. Charikles, dazed by this spectacle, impulsively burst out, “Lucky Mars, to be chained by such a goddess!” He rushed forward as he spoke, lips pursed, neck stretched to give her a kiss. Kallikratidas watched this display in silence. The temple has a second entrance for those who wish to contemplate the goddess from behind, for none of her parts should escape admiration. It is easy in that fashion to gaze upon her hind beauty.

Wanting to see the goddess entire we approached this gate. Upon being let in by the woman who kept the keys, we were overwhelmed by the abundance of beauty. As soon as the Athenian [Kallikratidas], who had so far been indifferent, glimpsed this side of the goddess, which reminded him of boys, he exclaimed with even greater enthusiasm than that of Charicles, “By Hercules, what a harmonious back. What rounded thighs, begging to be caressed with both hands! How well the lines of her cheeks flow, neither too skinny, showing the bones, nor so voluminous as to sag! How

inexpressible the tenderness of that smile pressed into her dimpled loins! How precise that line running from thigh, to leg, to foot! Now I can understand why Zeus' nectar is so sweet when Ganymede pours it. As for me, I would never take it from Hebe's hand." While Kallikratidas was declaiming this speech with much élan, Charikles remained fixed in place, the tenderness of his gaze betraying his emotions.

Filled with admiration, we noticed behind one of the thighs a stain like one on a robe, which only brought out the whiteness of the marble. It seemed a flaw in the stone. This kind of defect is not uncommon, and fate thus tends to thwart that which otherwise would reach perfection. Supposing this dark stain to be natural, my admiration for Praxiteles only increased, for having so skillfully hidden it where it would least be noticed. But the groundskeeper, who had stayed by our side, recounted an extraordinary and barely believable tale on this subject. (*Amores* 13–15, as interpreted by Andrew Calimach 2010 91–2, with slight modifications)

Pliny offers a briefer version of Lucian's tale of a young man besmitten by the statue: "They say that a certain man was once overcome with love for the statue and that, after he had hidden himself [in the shrine] during the nighttime, he embraced it and that it thus bears a stain, an indication of his lust" (*NH* 36.20; in Pollitt 1990, 84). According to the groundskeeper, the young man committed suicide afterwards by jumping onto rocks or into the sea (*Amores* 16). That several versions of the devotee's story exist shows it was widespread and expressed sentiment about the statue.

In order to understand the reactions of Lucian and his friends, as well as the obsessive young devotee, we need first to consider ancient theories of vision. Modern science describes vision as the result of light reflecting off the surface of an object and continuing until it reaches the eye and stimulates the rods and cones of the retina. This nerve stimulation is transmitted, upside down, via the optic nerve to the brain, which merges the images from each eye and turns it right-side up, creating a stereoscopic image.

Greek and Roman philosophers, however, had different theories describing the process of vision. Among the earliest are Democritus and the atomists, who proposed that every object emitted a tiny replica or *simulacrum* of itself that traveled through the air and to the eye, and from there entered the soul (*psuchē*) via the hollow channel of the optic nerve. Thus, while one is looking at a statue of Aphrodite, a tiny replica of this statue would enter his or her *psuchē*, physically connecting with the viewer. In the *Timaeus* (45B–D), Plato articulates a different theory, one of the visual fire, which probably derives from

older sources (Hubbard 2002). According to this theory a ray emanates from the viewer's eye, which would touch upon the statue and bring back an impression of it to the *psuchē*. This theory also explained how someone could react to being stared at by another person, since the visual fire was reaching out and touching him or her. A third theory was proposed by Aristotle. The air is filled with a moist medium called *pneuma* ("breath/air"), and movement in *pneuma* transmits impressions from an object to the moist eye and from there to the *psuchē*. Vision is rather like sound moving through air or waves through water.

While these theories are quite different, they share several common features. First, they all regard vision as a tactile process, akin to touching. Second, they all regard vision as something that touches the mind and soul directly. Thus to gaze upon an object is to have it physically enter into oneself. To see something catastrophic or pestilent causes the body to react physically, since the sight is like a disease entering the body. To see something ideal and perfect is to learn and uplift the soul. To look at something beautiful is to see something that one then desires. For the ancient viewer, a picture or a statue could give rise to desire for its subject, a desire that cannot be fulfilled by the object of the gaze.

As a species of touch, however, vision could also affect someone who was observed, without that person being aware of being affected in this way (or of being under observation, for that matter). Plato, for example, describes the effect of the lover's gaze on the beloved:

So the stream of beauty [generated by the lover/viewer's perception and desire] passes back into the beautiful one [the beloved/observed] through the eyes, the natural inlet to the soul, where it reanimates the passages of the feathers, waters them, and makes the feathers begin to grow, filling the soul of the loved one with love. (*Phaedrus* 255C–D, translated by Fowler in Plato 1914, 501)

Plato here describes the physiological reaction of the object of vision in terms that make it similar to the emotions generated in the viewer. Thus viewing was an active process, like a caress, rather than a passive one.

This power of imagery was well known in ancient rhetoric, which would describe an event or an object as if it were a work of art. *Ekphrasis*, the practice of describing visual phenomena or art in words, created *phantasiai*, impressions or presentations in the mind of the listener, and was used to generate an emotional reaction in the audience, as if they were looking at the real thing (Goldhill 1994, 208). This ability to make something visible to an audience or to bring out its *enargeia* ("visibility," "clarity," "manifest nature") was powerful

enough to overcome the intellectual capacities of the audience and was a mighty tool for the orator (Goldhill 2007, 7).

Returning now to the description of the visit to the Knidian Aphrodite given in *Amores*, Lucian's friend Charicles exclaims there that Mars was lucky to be caught in bed with the goddess, and he rushes forward to kiss the statue. The beauty of the figure entered his *psuchē* and stimulated his desire, as if he had seen the goddess herself and desired her as Mars had. Lucian's other friend, Kallikratidas, is more restrained until they all go around and view the backside of the statue (see [Figure 3.7](#)). But now he is unable to refrain from comment, noting the beauty of her back, thighs, and buttocks and the elegant line of her legs. He, too, expresses a desire to caress the statue. As Lucian notes, his orientation is toward male beauty, toward Ganymede rather than Hebe. Whereas Charikles responds to the statue's front, which was more explicit about the body's female sexual characteristics, Kallikratidas admires the back without these.

Figure 3.7 Aphrodite of Knidos of Praxiteles. Roman copy of Greek original (c. 350 bce).

Source: Staatliche Antikensammlungen und Glyptothek München. Photo: Renate Kühling.



There are here two points to consider. One, the emotional desire generated by gazing at a beautiful body is similar regardless of one's sexual orientation; the viewer expresses in strong words a delight in the forms and a desire to touch the work. One was not to glance at a work, but to gaze and to react emotionally and physiologically. Second, the reactions of both viewers suggest that there are shared aspects of proportions, line, and modeling in a beautiful body, whether male or female. Indeed Cicero, in recounting the creation of Zeuxis' *Helen* discussed above, notes that the town elders had first told

Zeuxis to look at the young men in town if he wanted to know whether they had any beautiful maidens that could serve as models for his painting. This was not sufficient for Zeuxis to create an image of female beauty, but it suggests that there were common elements of male and female beauty. In particular, the lines of the limbs on Aphrodite are noteworthy on both her front and her back side.

The desire for what one sees, to seek to touch and possess it, can be fraught with psychological consequences, as modern theories about the gaze and possession attest. The last section of the *Amores* 15 passage given above notes that there was a stain on one of the thighs of the statue. The keeper tells her audience that, rather than a flaw in the marble, the stain was the result of the actions of a young man who had become obsessed with the statue and attempted to couple with it, leaving his stain on the work. His action, however, led to further emotional turmoil and he killed himself afterwards. The veracity of the story is questionable, but both Pliny and Lucian mention it, so it was widespread and served as a cautionary tale. Viewing elicits a strong physiological and psychological reaction, which needs to be tempered through restraint. The difficulty or impossibility of possessing what one sees and desires can lead to violence and despair. The myth of Pygmalion, who loved a statue of a woman, kissing it, dressing it, and lying with it, confirms the potential hazards of desire for an idealized artistic beauty. His fate, however, was different through the intervention of Aphrodite, who enabled the statue to become human.

In modern theories about the gaze, the relationship between the viewer (subject) and the viewed (object) is constructed as one of power, the idea being that the gaze is a controlling device through which authority can be exerted and the object possessed (Mulvey 1975). This privileges the gaze of the viewer, however, in a way that the reciprocity seen in Greek theories of vision does not. Epicurean philosophy, for example, considered that the *simulacra* that enter the eye can deceive it, making the viewer the one who is dominated rather than the one who controls (Gordon 2002, 92–3). Revulsion and empathy can also be caused by visual images; thus the one who has the power of looking at them can be rendered powerless. Then, as we saw earlier in the *Anthologia Palatina* passage (16.160), Aphrodite wonders when Praxiteles could have seen her naked—so much alike her was the statue. Seeing her revealed without her permission was a sin and would lead to the destruction of the viewer.

In this regard, critics have discussed the relationship between the Knidian Aphrodite's own gaze, the viewer's action, and the unseen entity to her left. Is Aphrodite looking down, averting the gaze of viewers and thereby submitting to their domination, even though she

is a goddess? Certainly the gesture of her right arm partly shields her uncarved genitals and would suggest a sense of modesty or shame induced by the viewer approaching her statue in the sanctuary (see [Figure 3.3](#)). However, when the viewer stands where her gaze is directed, the gesture frames rather than covers her genitals, suggesting that from this position the viewer is not causing a submissive reaction. In the Munich statue the gaze does not seem as downcast as it is in some copies; the goddess rather appears to look directly toward the third entity in the triangle from her slightly elevated base, making this spot a position of privilege accorded by her gaze ([Figure 3.8](#)). Lucian describes her smile as *huperēphanon*, which has been translated variously as “arrogant,” “haughty,” or “proudly contempt,” although the word can also denote magnificence. This description would suggest that the figure was not necessarily regarded as submissive before the eyes of the viewer. Indeed, in *Imagines* 6, Lucian describes Aphrodites' gaze as dewy and welcoming, as actively responding to the viewer. Given the reciprocity of vision, this would only redouble the effect on the viewer, as Lucian's *ekphrasis* implies. In general, without modesty, restraint, and reverence in the viewer, as Jas Elsner has described it, viewing could quickly lead to transgression, as happened in the case of the young man who left the stain on her thigh (Elsner 2007, 124).

Figure 3.8 Aphrodite of Knidos of Praxiteles. Oblique view. Roman copy of Greek original (c. 350 bce).

Source: Staatliche Antikensammlungen und Glyptothek München. Photo: Renate Kühling.



Looking at mortal bodies is potentially less hazardous but still stirs emotions in the viewer. Commemorative statues, such as those for athletes who were victorious at games like those at Olympia, are meant to be substitutes for the victor, who is shown not at the moment of triumph, but at the moment of crowning before the assembled audience. The statue called *The Getty Youth* (Figure 3.9) wears an olive wreath and is like the statues of Olympia that are described in literary accounts, especially by Pausanias. An inscription from one base there can guide our response to the statue of the athlete:

Come to know Theognetos, looking upon him,
the boy Olympic victor, skilled charioteer of the wrestling,
most beautiful to see, and in competing
no worse than his form.

(AP 16.2; in Steiner 2001, 228)

Figure 3.9 Getty Youth (later fourth century–third century bce).

Source: The J. Paul Getty Museum, Villa Collection, Malibu, California.



As Deborah Steiner has noted, the figures do not meet the eye of the viewer, tempering the display of triumph through modesty (Steiner 2001, 222–32). Nevertheless, the viewer was expected to look not only with admiration, but from the standpoint of a potential lover of the object.

Another activity at some festivals like the Panathenaia in Athens was a competition known as the *euandria*: men, usually youths, displayed themselves nude before public judges and performed some type of sport, demonstrating their strength in what was essentially a beauty contest (Crowther 1985; Reed 1987). As with the athlete, beauty and strength were commensurate and admired publicly.

Another example of the relationship of viewer and viewed can be found on Greek painted pottery. Many of these vases have so-called *kalos* inscriptions, such as the formula *Chairestratos kalos* (“Chairestratos is beautiful”). The names are generally thought to be those of contemporary youths admired for their beauty, and occasionally the names may be linked to men known from other inscriptions (Francis and Vickers 1981, Shapiro 2000). On the exterior of the drinking cup in [Figure 3.10](#), we see the phrase *ho pais kalos*, or “the boy is beautiful”: *ho pais* is written above the youth on the left and *kalos* over his counterpart on the right. The nude boy on the left has a fillet or ribbon tied around his head and holds branches in his hands, signs that he is a victor of some type, like the Getty Youth. The older youth in front of him offers another fillet and observes him directly, while the boy himself looks modestly toward the ground, in spite of being the center of attention. On the right side the other youth, marked as *kalos*, holds a bud in his hand while two adult men contemplate him and hold buds in their own hands. This youth, too, lowers his gaze while his beauty is recognized by the viewers on the cup, as well as by the viewer of the cup itself, who would read the inscription aloud and himself proclaim the youth's beauty (Slater 1999). That the scene takes place in a setting like the *palaistra*, where men and youths used to exercise and train, makes the association of beauty and physical skill similar to that of the *euandria*.

Figure 3.10 Cup with youth and men by Douris (c. 490 bce).

Source: London E51. © The Trustees of the British Museum.



On other vases we see figures interact with one another in various ways outside of athletics and the *palaistra*. On another cup by Douris we see a gathering of bearded adult men and two beardless youths (Figure 3.11). The one on the right is flanked by two men, one of whom holds forth a garland and the other a sash. The youth, who can be regarded as the beloved or *erōmenos* being courted by the older man or *erastēs*, modestly lowers his gaze and wears part of his mantle over his head. The youth on the left side of the cup holding the lyre interacts quite differently with the older man before him; this *erastēs* holds a sprig or flower offering. That these two look at each other signifies that they have an established relationship, and the mutual look should be seen as akin to the effect described by Plato earlier (Hubbard 2002; 2003, 15). Both youths are nearly identical in their form, well muscled with broad chests, and, were we to disrobe them like the youths in Figure 3.10, we would find ample buttocks and thighs not unlike those of Aphrodite praised by Kallikratidas.

Figure 3.11 Cup with youth and men by Douris (c. 480 bce).

Source: New York 52.11.4. © The Metropolitan Museum of Art / Art Resource, NY.



Signs of victory or praise like ribbons or wreaths, as well as nudity and viewer reactions to a picture, make it fairly easy to recognize the beauty of a figure and the desire it can stimulate. We should also consider that clothed figures could equally stimulate desire by attracting the gaze. We noted earlier that the *korai* figures of the archaic period (see [Figure 3.4](#)) are dressed in both a thin inner garment and a heavier mantle, both of which still give some idea of the body underneath through the cling and pull of the fabric. The figure represents the idealized maiden, just entering puberty and performing in a ritual before the entire city. This is, in a sense, her coming-out appearance, where she attracts the eye of potential suitors. While modesty and respectability are essential requirements, one still can see the hem of the garment pulling up over the ankle in a way that may have drawn the eye of the viewers and stimulated their desire, as a sign of her graceful movement (Stieber 2004, 118–20). This effect would have only increased with the development of the thin-drapery style in the late fifth century.

We can also glimpse the potential for subtle display to stimulate desire in the gesture, usually labeled *anakalypsis* (“uncovering”), through which the bride pulls aside her veil to reveal her face to the groom, who has arrived at her house to claim her. This gesture of revealing the face becomes quite common in marriage scenes of the archaic period, but we can perhaps gain a better sense of the sensuality of the unveiling on a Campanian situla from the fourth

century showing Paris and Helen (Figure 3.12). Paris stands like a crowned, nude victor to the left, while Helen is at the center and pulls aside her veil with both hands. She looks toward the ground modestly, like a bride, but the glimpse of her beauty—both that of her face and that of her body through the transparent drapery—surely seals the fate of Paris. Further to the right, Aphrodite and Eros watch the scene, so the connection between sight and desire is emphasized through their agency. The power of this revealing of the bride is also found in the stories and images of Menelaos, when the hero retrieves Helen during the fall of Troy. While Menelaos is initially angry and intends to kill her, his anger turns to desire at the sight of her face or body. In vase painting he is sometimes shown dropping his sword and running after her with no intent but desire.

Figure 3.12 Campanian Situla with Paris and Helen by the Parrish Painter (350–325 bce).

Source: London 1928,0719.3. © The Trustees of the British Museum.



Turning to Roman painting, the relationship of beauty, desire, and the gaze is represented in a number of paintings of the hunter Narcissus looking at his reflection in a pool of water (Figure 3.13). In the painting, Narcissus leans on a rock, with a spear resting on his shoulder and thigh. Echo stands next to him and both look at the upside-down face in the pool. Philostratus, in his ekphrastic description of a painting of Narcissus, gives us a guide for viewing the painting. He comments directly to the figure of Narcissus: “[you] are acting as though you had met a companion, you wait for some move on his part” (Philostratus 1.23.3, translated by Fairbanks in Philostratus and Callistratus 1931). After a sensual description of the figure, Philostratus states:

Whether the panting of his breast remains from his hunting or is already the panting of love I do not know. The eye, surely, is that of a man deeply in love, for its natural brightness and intensity are softened by a longing that settles upon it, and he perhaps thinks that he is loved in return, since the reflection gazes at him in just the way that he looks at it. (Philostratus 1.23.4)

Figure 3.13 Fresco of Narcissus and Echo from Pompeii (first century ce).

Source: Naples 17739. Scala / Art Resource, NY.



In the painting, Echo, too, looks at the image of Narcissus in the pool rather than at the real person; she, too, must desire and love that image, which is unreal and unattainable.

Judging from literary sources on optics, Romans shared many of the same ideas about vision and its relationship to desire as the Greeks, and the replication or adaptation of classical Greek works like the *Doryphoros*, the Aphrodite of Knidos, and the crouching bather demonstrates the enduring appeal of these works for the Romans. It has been noted, however, that Roman attitudes to sex and viewing also differ from those of the Greeks, particularly when it comes to the importance accorded to social class and power. Roman attitudes to

public nudity were also different, as can be seen in the statue of Augustus from the Prima Porta ([Figure 3.14](#)). It has long been recognized that the figure's body is modeled on that of the *Doryphoros*, but it is dressed (compare [Figure 3.1](#)): this is part of the Augustan use of classical art for developing an expression of the *princeps*' agenda. As an expression of power (*imperium*), the statue is commanding to the viewer.

Figure 3.14 Augustus of the Prima Porta (late first century bce—early first century ce).

Source: Museo Chiaramonti, Vatican. Vanni / Art Resource, NY.



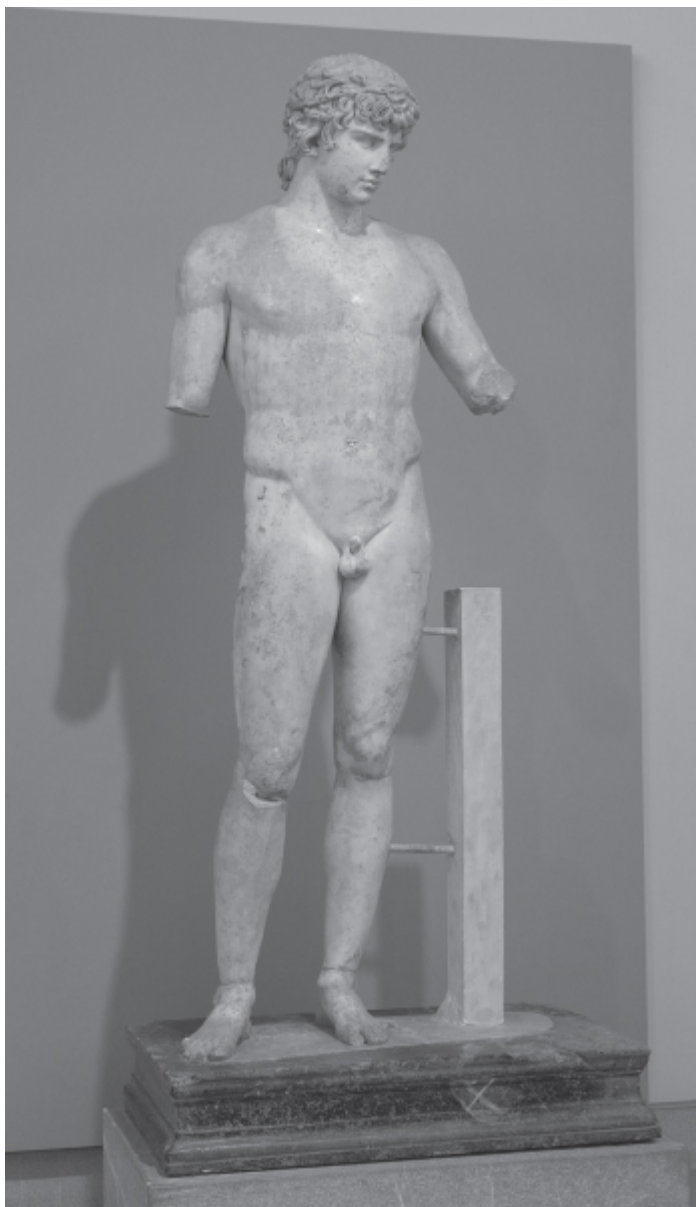
Recently Caroline Vout has argued that there is also an erotic dimension to the representation of the emperor, a dimension that we should consider as part of the potential viewer's reaction to such statues (Vout 2007). As she notes, ancient biographical sources not only record the political and military deeds of emperors; they are quite direct about their sexual deeds as well. Suetonius, for example, notes that Augustus was “exceptionally good-looking and very attractive at all stages of his life” (*Augustus* 79.1, translated in Vout 2007, 7). Even though Suetonius elsewhere (69.1) says that Augustus'

eyebrows met above the nose, which projected slightly, and that he was of fairly small stature and occasionally walked with a limp, the historian states that Augustus had many affairs and would not shrink from taking a woman out of the dining room, for intercourse, even in front of her husband. The imperial portrait of Augustus is both idealized and individualized, unlike the *Doryphoros*, making the attractiveness of the emperor more personal for the viewer. Other emperors, such as Trajan, were supremely alluring when they appeared before the public, making women desire to have children (Kampen 1997, 271). Power, attraction, and desire go hand in hand, and the presence of a Cupid at the feet of Augustus indexes not only the emperor's lineage from Venus, but his own personal desirability.

One last example shows the immortalization of human beauty through art. Antinoös was a youth from Bithynia in Asia Minor who became the *erōmenos* (beloved) of Emperor Hadrian (117–38 ce). According to literary sources, he drowned in the Nile, although the circumstances are not clear. After his death, Hadrian honored him with festivals, essentially deifying him. Throughout the empire statues of Antinoös began to appear, including one that was excavated at Delphi ([Figure 3.15](#)). This figure is somewhat Alexander-like in appearance, but there is actually a good deal of variation in Antinoös' appearance among the extant statues that have been identified as representing him, so that he also resembles Dionysos, Apollo, or a pharaoh, perhaps in keeping with local standards of beauty. While there is some dispute over the authenticity of some of these works, the viewer, as Vout suggests, is invited to look at the figure in place of his lover Hadrian (Vout 2007, 106). Beauty and desire can be said to conquer the beholder, even an emperor.

Figure 3.15 Antinoös (c. 130 ce).

Source: Delphi Archaeological Museum. Vanni / Art Resource, NY.



Guide to Further Reading

For ancient sources on Greek art, see Pollitt 1990. For a discussion of terminology, see Pollitt 1974. On the body generally, Osborne 2011 is a good place to start. On Polykleitos and the *Doryphoros*, consult Stewart 2008, 144–8. On Praxiteles and the *Aphrodite of Knidos*, see Havelock 1995, Stewart 1997, 97–106, Pasquier and Martinez 2007,

139–49. On the appeal of statues of Aphrodite in the Hellenistic and Roman eras, see Kousser 2008, 17–44. On nudity, see Stewart 1997, 24–42, Salomon 1997. On ancient theories of vision and modern theories about the gaze, see Stewart 1997, 13–23, Fredrick 2002, Hubbard 2003, Stansbury-O'Donnell 2006, 52–88. On modesty and the gaze, see again Stewart, 1997, 14–15, also Barton 2002. On *ekphrasis*, vision, and *phantasia*, look at Goldhill 1994 and 2007 and at Elsner 1995, 21–48. On the experience of viewing sculpture, Steiner 2001, 185–250 is useful. For reactions to sexual scenes, see Clarke 1998 and 2002. On *kalos* inscriptions, see Lear and Cantarella 2008, 164–73, with discussion of earlier interpretations. Useful reading on the interaction of gaze in fifth-century pottery is Frontisi-Ducroux 1995, Frontisi-Ducroux and Vernant 1997, and Hubbard 2002 and 2003. On *anakalypsis* and wedding, see Sutton 1997/8. On Pygmalion and vision, Elsner 2007, 121–31. Finally, on Narcissus and Philostratus, see Newby 2002 and again Elsner 2007, 132–76.

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Chapter 4

Foucault's *History of Sexuality* and the Discipline of Classics

Kirk Ormand

The Shifting Ground of Foucault's *History*

The discipline of classics might be excused for expressing some confusion over Michel Foucault's incomplete, revolutionary last work, *The History of Sexuality* (vols. 1–3). The first volume, published in French in 1976 (Foucault 1978), laid out what Foucault planned as the theoretical groundwork for the entire six-volume project. It has little to do directly with classical antiquity, since it begins with examples no earlier than the seventeenth century, and it contains much fuller accounts of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century than of any other time period (Halperin 1990, 64). The second volume (Foucault 1985), dealing with the sexual discourse of the Greeks, begins in the fourth century bce and treats primarily legal and philosophical texts (so no Sappho or Anacreon, no Aristophanes, no *poetry*). The third volume (Foucault 1986) deals with Greek and Roman texts of the Roman Empire, with a curious emphasis on prose works, many of them relatively obscure, beginning with Artemidorus' handbook of dream interpretation (so no Catullus, no Roman comedy, no Cicero, no Martial, no Juvenal). What we have, then, is not a history of literary representations of sex, nor a history of sexual practice in the ancient world—nor, in its unfinished state, a history of sexuality.

Foucault's work, nonetheless, is spectacularly important for our understanding of sexuality and of ancient sexual discourse. But in

order realize the scope of Foucault's achievement we must realize that ancient sexual discourse is not the same thing as sexuality.

Volume 1: Sexuality as a Product of Discourse

It takes Michel Foucault 68 pages to reach an explicit definition of sexuality in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, and, when he does, what he offers us is less a definition of a thing than a description, referring back to the discursive analysis that has filled the previous 67 pages:

“Sexuality”: the correlative of that slowly developed discursive practice which constitutes the *scientia sexualis*. The essential features of this sexuality are not the expression of a representation that is more or less distorted by ideology, or of a misunderstanding caused by taboos; they correspond to the functional requirements of a discourse that must produce its truth. (Foucault 1978, 68)

In the two phrases in which Foucault specifies what sexuality is *not*, we can recognize the rejection or, at least, qualification of two major strands of critical theory. Sexuality is not “the expression of a representation that is more or less distorted by ideology,” which is to say that it is not the product of ideological forces that constitute subjects, as Foucault's teacher and friend, the Marxist Louis Althusser (Althusser 1971, 127–88), might have maintained. Nor is it a psychological state produced by a psychiatric patient's failure to come successfully to grips with the social constraints placed on his sexual drives (“taboos”), as explained especially by Freud. Instead Foucault's definition carefully avoids ascribing a *cause* to sexuality, positing it as a “correlative” of a particular *discourse*.

As David Halperin and Arnold Davidson among many others have shown, the most radical feature of Foucault's first volume consists of his decision to analyze the history of sexuality as a history of *discourses* (Halperin 1995, 4; 1990, 65–6; A. Davidson 2001, 32–7, 203–11). Though Foucault nowhere gives a single, decisive definition of this concept, discourses are various social modes of organizing language that give it meaning and insert it into specific structures of power. Discourses, as Foucault defined them, prescribe limits on what can be said in specific contexts and on what can be considered valid statements, exerting a pressure on linguistic content that goes beyond the limits of language (which imposes more basic rules of sound,

syntax, and grammar), and also beyond the explicit limits of logic:

One finds there a systematicity that is neither of the logical nor of the linguistic type. Discursive practices are characterized by the carving out of a field of objects, by the definition of a legitimate perspective for the subject of knowledge, by the fixing of norms for the elaboration of concepts and theories. Each discursive practice thus implies a play of prescriptions that governs the exclusions and choices. (Foucault 1994, 240–1, quoted and translated in A. Davidson 2001, 197)

Thus, to take a simple example, legal discourse can discuss the relative acceptability of killing another person in given situations (with or without premeditation, in self-defence, accidentally, with criminal neglect), but it cannot tell us through what mode of life we will become most happy. That is a question beyond legal discursive considerations.

A crucial aspect of discursive practice is that each discourse defines, implicitly, what sorts of statements will constitute “truth” within its boundaries. Truth becomes, in discursive analysis, not an external object to be correctly grasped, but a rhetorical trope to be deployed for the greatest effect: “‘Truth’ is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation, and operation of statements” (Foucault 1980, 133; quoted in A. Davidson 2001, 67). Truth, then, is both the contingent product of particular discursive practices and a mode of validating statements within those discourses; as we will see, Foucault saw the deployment of a certain kind of “truth” to be crucial to the development of sexuality in the late nineteenth century.

Discursive analysis works, then, analogously to the theory of subject formation espoused by Althusser and other Marxists. Newly emerging discourses are indicators of new ways of thinking—identifiable by new words and new ways of speaking—and they also cause people to define themselves through those new ways of thinking. Unlike Althusser’s “ideologies,” however, discourses are not necessarily produced by institutions (the state, schools, churches) and are not *in themselves* modes of wielding power. The medical discourse of psychiatry, for example, cuts across several institutions, as Foucault showed: perhaps it originates in medical organizations, but it is quickly adapted for use in institutions of education and law (Foucault 1978, 103–14). At the same time, discourses are always implicated in non-discursive structures of power (medical discourse has its place in structures of law enforcement, for example); and it is a strength of Foucault’s later mode of analysis (which he called “genealogical,” as opposed to “archaeological”) that it explicates the functioning of

discourse in relation to these institutions of power (A. Davidson 2001, 192–209).

A history that takes as its method the study of shifts in discourse is, by its very nature, more carefully attuned to changes in modes of speech and thought than in tracking down causes for these shifts. This has led critics of Foucault to complain that his method does not allow for an understanding of the processes of historical change, or, more importantly, does not provide a model for political resistance leading to change (Miller 1998, 174–5; Richlin 1998). Indeed Foucault's determination to reveal and to document the operations of discourse in its very positivity left him little scope for analyzing the causes of the shifts in discourse that he observed and articulated; of more pressing interest was to understand how these discourses allowed the exercise of certain manifestations of power and, simultaneously, enabled new forms of resistance to them (Foucault 1978, 70, 92–102). As Arnold Davidson has pointed out: “The unearthing of discontinuities between systems of knowledge is not an assumption of his method but a consequence of it” (A. Davidson 2001, 68).

Given this method, Foucault's study of “sexuality” was never going to be a historical description of sexual practices across time. Rather, Foucault set out to explain how it was that sexuality became understood as the core of the truth of the individual. He therefore had to examine the development of discourses—in this case, particularly legal and medical discourses—that constitute people as particular subjects of sexuality and, as such, as both subjects and objects of new forms of government. He was interested in sexuality not as a thing but as a strategy of modern power—as a device or apparatus (*dispositif*) that enabled the liberal state to develop new ways of disciplining the individual. At issue here is the most radical of Foucault's claims, one that is often disallowed without actual engagement, namely that “sexuality” in this sense names a new political strategy that took gradual shape in the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, before which time there was no “sexuality”: persons defined by their sexuality, whom we call heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual, could no more be said to exist in earlier epochs than bourgeois and proletarians could be said to exist in times before the rise of capitalism. This categorical claim is a fundamentally different one from that more frequently taken up by classicists, namely that the ancient Greeks and Romans classified and experienced sex (especially homoerotic sex) differently from the way we do. In Volume 1 Foucault makes the radical claim that the modern homosexual was a novel and unprecedented creation, because never before had it been possible for sexuality to be incorporated into the individual as a basic means of

defining and differentiating human subjects.

Obviously Foucault understands “homosexuality” as something more than same-sex desire. Though this point has been made many times, it continues to produce considerable confusion (see, e.g., J. Davidson 2007, 148). To be sure, same-sex desire seems to exist, taking one form or another, in virtually every culture in human history. But same-sex desire is simply an aspect of human intentionality (and in animals, of biological drive); in itself it has no history. It is only when a society ascribes particular meaning to same-sex desire and directs it into socially recognized actions, thoughts, or modes of being that it can become the subject of historical inquiry. In the West in the modern period, same-sex desire has a curious history, in which the gender of the object of one's desire has become a key to unlocking the most secret parts of a person's psyche, has become, in fact, constitutive of a particular species of individual.

Simply put, modern discourses of the self, all more or less derived from sexology, psychology, criminology, medicine, and other forensic domains, postulate for sexuality what Foucault called “a general and diffuse causality” (Foucault 1978, 65–6): the idea that one's sexuality affects and explains every aspect of one's being. The evidence for this belief in diffuse causality in modern discourses is everywhere, from the notion that ordinary human problems are symptoms of sexual maladjustment to common stereotypes about gay men—who dress well, dance well, enjoy opera and interior design—to fears about lesbian Marxists, who are always just on the verge of taking over our institutions of higher learning (if they have not done so already) by means of their uncanny and powerful political organization.

This understanding of sexuality is not present in the ancient world. Indeed it could not be, as A. Davidson has persuasively shown, because to understand sexuality—especially homosexuality—in this way is to presuppose the development of what A. Davidson has termed a “psychiatric style of reasoning” (A. Davidson 2001, 35–40). Before the advent of this distinctive style of reasoning, which A. Davidson traces to Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia sexualis* (Krafft-Ebing 1965; first published in 1886) and to a variety of earlier psychiatric and sexological writings, even such cases as a man who was unable to attain an erection without being whipped were diagnosed in purely physiological terms. However easily we might recognize such a subject as a “masochist,” only with the advent of psychiatric reasoning were physicians—and society at large—able to make diagnoses that found the cause for this sexual “perversion” not in deficient physiology (in this case, insufficient heat in the loins), but in an internal, psychic state that explained the truth about the patient.

It is not the case, as is occasionally asserted and often implied, that

these shifts in *discourse* are simply a matter of semantics, of the invention of new words (see, e.g., J. Davidson 2007, 163–206). The appearance of new words in medical language—notably “homosexual” and “heterosexual”—is not simply that of neologisms created to express ideas that everyone was already thinking with. Neither, of course, are they sufficient to create people who fit into those categories *ex nihilo*. Rather, new words are markers of important shifts in modes of thought, modes that interact with both institutions and individuals. In the Foucauldian model of discourse, these new modes of thinking create *effects* that can be used in repressive and normalizing ways, but they are also *causes* for the self-identification of subjects within these modes of discourse. Much as Althusser suggested that ideology produces subjects who “work by themselves” (Althusser 1971, 181), discourses produce subjects who occupy particular identities “by themselves.” As Foucault explained, “homosexuality began to speak in its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or ‘naturalness’ be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified” (Foucault 1978, 101; see A. Davidson 2001, 57 on the concept of “dynamic nominalism”).

What Foucault set out to describe in Volume 1, then, was not a theory of the history of sexual practices in the West but rather a theory of the shift in strategies of power, along with a concomitant shift in the order of discourse, that produced sexual *identities* through a particular organization and systematization of practices, both political and discursive. In the course of this volume, he traced changes in the way in which the religious practice of confession evolved into a new secular pastorate, using as evidence seventeenth- and eighteenth-century manuals for priests, psychiatric case studies, and the development of psychoanalytic theory. Foucault finds the foundation of psychoanalysis in the practice of confession, at least in terms of structure: a subject (confessor, patient) must delve into his or her own interiority for evidence of the dark truth of his/her nature, and relay it verbally to a trained professional (priest, doctor) in order to achieve a desired state (salvation, cure). But perhaps the most important element of this shift in discourse is the assertion that psychiatric thinking

entailed an *incorporation of perversions* and a new *specification of individuals*. As defined by the ancient civil or canonical codes, sodomy was a category of forbidden acts; their perpetrator was nothing more than the juridical subject of them. The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious

physiology. Nothing that went into his total composition was unaffected by his sexuality ... The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species. (Foucault 1978, 43)

This passage has been much misunderstood. Foucault is not claiming that same-sex desire did not exist, was not considered a problem, or was not legislated against before the nineteenth century. Rather, Foucault is claiming that the *forms of discourse*, as well as the modes of power that are, as he says, “immanent in this discourse” (Foucault 1978, 70), shift radically with the arrival of the practice of psychiatry (see Halperin 2002, 31–2, 41–4). Before that discursive shift, there can be no homosexuals; not because Foucault imagines some sort of utopian world before an oppressive regime, or because he thinks that sodomites did not desire persons of the same sex as themselves, but because this new medical discourse presupposes a new kind of individual, and thus makes possible a more thorough and complete classification and control of the person than had been previously imaginable. This discursive shift therefore enables *both* the exercise of power immanent in psychiatry and the exercise of a counter-power, manifest in new forms of resistance, which came into being when “homosexuality began to speak in its own behalf” (Foucault 1978, 101). To argue that there are gay people to be found in ancient Greece and Rome is, in other words, to confuse same-sex desire (which has no discursive history in itself) with a particular discursive and political formation of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Volumes 2 and 3: The Turn to Problematization

In a surprising passage from one of Foucault's last interviews, the interlocutor asks: “Do you still think that understanding sexuality is central for understanding who we are?” and Foucault responds: “I must confess that I am much more interested in problems about techniques of the self and things like that than sex ...sex is boring” (Foucault 1984, 340). And indeed, in the eight years that passed between the first and the second volume of the *History of Sexuality*, it is clear that Foucault's entire approach to the problem has changed (see Halperin 1990, 65–7). Foucault himself addresses this change in the introduction to his second volume. As he explains, his initial project involved three areas of investigation concerning “sexuality”: “(1) the formation of sciences that refer to it, (2) the systems of power

that regulate its practice, (3) the forms within which individuals are able, are obliged, to recognize themselves as subjects of this sexuality” (Foucault 1985, 4). The first two were dealt with, at least in sketch, in Volume 1; but Foucault came gradually to realize that he had failed to question the assumptions behind the third category of knowledge and that, if he was going to write a history of “sexuality,” he needed to undertake a genealogical analysis of the desiring subject. As he put it, “with this genealogy the idea was to investigate how individuals were led to practice, on themselves and on others, a hermeneutics of desire, a hermeneutics of which their sexual behavior was doubtless the occasion, but certainly not the exclusive domain” (Foucault 1985, 5).

The result was Volume 2, perhaps the volume most read and least accepted by the discipline of classics. In it Foucault goes back to a particular set of texts from the late fifth and fourth centuries and traces the “problematization” of desire and self-mastery with respect to the practice of pederasty as it is discussed in these texts. He analyzes, in an admittedly limited set of theoretical and prescriptive writings, the modes of discourse through which the ancient Greeks constituted the pleasure of the body as an *ethical* problem (Halperin 1990, 66). In this analysis, Foucault comes to several conclusions about Greek discourses of *aphrodisia*, that set of bodily experiences that comprises “acts, pleasures, and desires” (Foucault 1985, 42–3). The most important of these conclusions is that according to ancient philosophical and legal discourses men must practice *enkrateia* (“self-control”), a limiting of such experiences, not because pleasure or desire are in themselves morally wrong, but because the masculine ideal most admired featured the ability to withstand the pressure of bodily need. Men were expected to display mastery over themselves and their own pleasures or desires. For free adult men in Greece, this self-control was seen as homologous to other sorts of mastery (political, economic, social). Just as an adult man should control his own desires and not give in to them overmuch, an adult man should control his wife and his household and not let them spin out of control. Any failure of self-control, regardless of the form it took, indicated a failure of proper masculinity.

At the same time, Foucault largely accepted the observations of Sir Kenneth Dover and Paul Veyne that a man's sexual *role* was more important in determining his proper sexual subjectivity than his choice of sexual object. That is to say, the sexual relationships in ancient Greece and Rome that are most often discussed are *pederastic* ones, in which an older man (the *erastēs*) pursues sexual relations with a younger one (the *erōmenos*), and in which it is assumed that the older man is interested in obtaining sexual pleasure through physical contact with the younger—routinely, though not exclusively, by

means of sexual penetration. In such relationships no shame is attached to an *erastēs* simply for desiring an *erōmenos* (though any excess of desire, demonstrating a lack of *enkrateia*, could result in some public ridicule). In other words, the categories of sexual experience that the Greeks thought with are not ours, as Foucault explained:

the notion of homosexuality is plainly inadequate as a means of referring to an experience, forms of valuation, and a system of categorization so different from ours. The Greeks did not see love for one's own sex and love for the other sex as opposites, as two exclusive choices, two radically different types of behavior. The dividing lines did not follow that kind of boundary. What distinguished a moderate, self-possessed man from one given to pleasures was, from the view point of ethics, much more important than what differentiated, among themselves, the categories of pleasures that invited the greatest devotion. (Foucault 1985, 187)

Within such a system, which has since been more carefully articulated by scholars such as Halperin (1990, 1995, 2002), Winkler (1990), and Detel (2005), what particularly interested Foucault was the seemingly paradoxical role of the pursued youth, the *erōmenos*. Because it was shameful for any man to be sexually penetrated in ancient Greece, and completely unacceptable for any adult man to desire to be penetrated, the Greeks expended considerable anxiety on these young men who, on the one hand, were the targets of considerable lust and, on the other, might be seen to be compromised in their manhood if they allowed themselves to be penetrated. This led to a certain reticence on the part of Greek texts to talk explicitly about sexual acts (Dover 1989, 11, 14, 44–5, 91). While critics have portrayed the description of this sexual system by Dover, Foucault, Halperin, and others as an inflexible orthodoxy (e.g., J. Davidson 2007, ch. 4), in fact Foucault saw the system, and especially the role of the *erōmenos* in it, as contingent and subject to contrary forces: “Since there is an important and large literature about loving boys in Greek culture, some historians say, ‘Well, that’s the proof that they loved boys.’ But I say that proves that loving boys was a problem” (Foucault 1984, 344).

Finally, a good deal of criticism has been leveled at Foucault for focusing on what may, after all, have been a relatively narrow aspect of Greek sexual life, and for suggesting that this was the *only* form that Greek desire could take (J. Davidson 2007, 119–27; see Sissa, ch. 16 in this volume). But again, Foucault explicitly stated that, because his main focus was the history of sexual ethics, of man's relation to himself as a subject of desire, he was analyzing only prescriptive texts.

He was, moreover, particularly interested in the “problematic” relation expressed by pederasty. A passage that has been rarely cited is worth quoting at length:

It is the existence of this disparity [between *erastēs* and *erōmenos*] that marked the relationship that philosophers and moralists concerned themselves with. This special attention should not lead us to draw hasty conclusions either about the sexual behaviors of the Greeks or about the details of their tastes ... We must not imagine in any case that only this type of relation was practiced; one finds many references to male love relationships that did not conform to this schema and did not include this “age differential.” We would be just as mistaken to suppose that, though practiced, these other forms of relations were frowned upon and regarded as unseemly. Relations between young boys were deemed completely natural and in keeping with their condition. On the other hand, people could mention as a special case—without censure—an abiding love relationship between two men who were well past adolescence ... Passivity was always disliked, and for an adult [man] to be suspected of it was especially serious. But whether these relations met with easy acceptance or tended to be suspect, the important thing for the moment is to see that they were not an object of moral solicitude or of very great theoretical interest. (Foucault 1985, 194–5)

Put another way, the last thing Foucault intended to do was preclude investigation into the myriad particulars of Greek sexual practice, or into the articulation of pre-modern sexual identities or subjectivities (see Halperin 2002, 41–5; *pace* Sissa in this volume, ch. 16).

Both method and content changed between Volumes 1 and 2. In turning to a genealogical history of the desiring subject, Foucault had, quite literally, shifted the focus away from sexuality *per se*. Instead, as he explains, he now conceived the project as a history of individuals' ethical relations to their *selves*, to the maintenance of their bodies, pleasures, and desires. In undertaking this investigation, Foucault gives us a set of categories that future historians can use to analyze other texts from classical antiquity (Halperin 1990, 67). At the same time, readers who come to Volume 2 after reading the brief, scintillating theory of Volume 1 are often struck by a marked shift in tone. For all that Foucault is interested in discourses of the self in Volume 2, his readings there of various works are remarkably flat; he seems, at times, ill attuned to the rules of genre that limit, define, and direct interpretation of ancient texts (see, e.g., Goldhill 1995; Sissa, Chapter 16 in this volume).

In Volume 3 Foucault's attention again shifts, although his method remains largely the same. Here again, Foucault has been criticized for a peculiarly limited set of investigations into Roman sexual practices (e.g., Miller 1998; Richlin 1998); and in fact he overleaps the entire Roman republic in order to focus on philosophical and medical texts from the Roman Empire, primarily the second century. Foucault assumes that the ethical system he described for classical Greece continued to remain in force, more or less, up to this point. What leads him to this particular set of imperial texts is an important shift in the discourses that, in the classical Greek world, encouraged *enkrateia*. Foucault sees in the philosophy of Seneca and his successors a "new austerity," in which the goal of the subject—virtually always male—is not merely to control his own desires as a demonstration of his ability to control other aspects of his social and political life, but to perfect his mode of life for its own sake. Self-control becomes not just a necessity, a hard-fought constant struggle against one's own antagonistic desires, but a source of pleasure in and of itself (Foucault 1986, 65–6). In other words, the texts that Foucault chooses to study are not selected because he thinks they are representative, but because they mark a shift in the discursive matrices that define *technē tou biou*, the mode of (one's) life.

At the same time, Foucault distinguishes the apparent "austerity" of Stoicism from the valorization of self-denial found in Christian and Christianizing discourse that he hoped to discuss in a fourth volume (Foucault 1984, 362–5). He states this succinctly early in Volume 3:

It was against this background of this cultivation of the self, of its themes and practices, that reflection on the ethics of pleasure developed in the first centuries of our era ... What may be regarded, at first sight, as a more pronounced severity, an increased austerity, stricter requirements, should not in fact be interpreted as a tightening of interdictions. The domain of behaviors that might be forbidden did not expand to any appreciable extent, and there was no attempt to organize systems of prohibition that would be more authoritarian and efficacious. The change had much more to do with the manner in which the individual needed to form himself as an ethical subject ... A break with the traditional ethics of self-mastery? Clearly not, but rather, a shift, a change of orientation, a difference in emphasis. (Foucault 1986, 67)

The third volume has proven, in some regards, the most maddening of Foucault's three-volume *History*, even if it has also proven to have had the greatest impact on postmodern ethics; but it is worth evaluating in the terms that Foucault set out. The sources he considers are limited. He says as much: "it being understood, of

course, that this phenomenon concerned only social groups, *very limited in number*, that were bearers of culture and for whose members a *technē tou biou* could have a meaning and a reality” (Foucault 1986, 45; emphasis mine). But it is more important that Foucault has left the problem of “sexuality” to one side: he is writing a history of techniques of the self, and control of sexual desire is only one aspect of the practice of *askēsis* that he traces here. In an interview in 1984, Foucault indicated that he no longer thought of Volume 3 as part of the *History of Sexuality* but regarded it a separate work, and that the *History* would be continued by what most consider to be the fourth (never published) volume, on Christian doctrines of the flesh (Foucault 1984, 342). Foucault's Volume 3, then, is not a history of sexuality, or even of sexual practice, in the Roman Empire; it is rather an intensive study into a particular, significant shift in the discourses and practices of subjectivity, in which desire continues to play a role.

Classicists Discipline Foucault

Foucault famously did not engage in polemic (Foucault 1984, 381). Nonetheless, he inspired a heated response from various quarters of the discipline of classics, which, curiously, has tended to be less receptive to his work than medieval and early modern studies have been. Some scholars agreed with the central tenets of Foucault's work and immediately after the publication of Volumes 2 and 3 began exploring, often with greater nuance and attention to detail than Foucault, ancient Greek (and occasionally Roman) discourses about sex (most notably Winkler 1990; Halperin 1990; Halperin, Winkler, and Zeitlin, 1990). In the interests of space, I will have little to say about these works, other than to note that they, perhaps more directly than Foucault's work, inspired a set of serious but, in my view, flawed critiques of the entire Foucauldian project. I treat here two of the most serious of these critical responses.

Feminist classicists

Perhaps the most immediate challenge came from feminist classicists, who found fault with Foucault on both methodological and substantive grounds. Among the most prolific of these critics was (and is) Amy Richlin, who argues in a series of articles that Foucault, by ignoring the possibility of women as sexual subjects, produces a view of ancient sexual practice that is irreparably skewed (see Richlin 1998;

duBois 1995, 127–62). Classicists are not alone in this critique of Foucault; it has long been noted by feminist scholars that, when dealing with the “subject,” Foucault is nearly always dealing with a masculine subject, and that he did not submit the construct of gender to the kind of discursive analysis that he did sexuality, especially male homosexuality (see, e.g., Walters 1996, 844). Why he did not is a troubling question; it is nonetheless not quite true, as Richlin claims, that the misogyny of the classical canon “does not bother Foucault” (Richlin 1998, 151). Foucault explicitly rejected the ancient Greeks as a utopian society, in part because of that misogyny (Foucault 1984, 344), and personally allied himself with feminist scholars (Halperin 1995, 161).

A more complex and less intuitive attack from feminist scholars has been the claim that Foucault simply got it wrong; that, in fact, sexuality as it exists in the modern world *did* exist in antiquity, and that Foucault's search for an antiquity innocent of sexuality and free of sexual interdiction blinded him to this fact. The fundamental difficulty of all such arguments is that they do not engage fully with Foucault's explanation of “sexuality” as a product and correlative of the nineteenth century discursive and political practices. In brief, Foucault's definition of “sexuality” as a node of normalizing and disciplinary powers requires a set of conditions that simply do not obtain in the ancient Mediterranean world, where there can be sexual preference but not sexuality, and where sexual behavior, though it can be admirable or disgraceful, does not serve to define individuals as belonging to a unique and peculiar type, irrespective of rank and status.

Richlin has been more explicit than most in pointing out where she disagrees with Foucault's reading of antiquity, and because of this honesty I take her as a particularly clear example of a mode of argument that is pervasive. In arguing for the existence of homosexuality in antiquity, Richlin assumes that what looks like a sexual orientation necessarily equals sexuality: “The point about ‘gay’ sexuality not existing as a concept in antiquity is also a problematic one since there are, in fact, texts that lump male–male and female–female sex together” (Richlin 1998, 148). There are, in fact, not all that many non-Christian ancient texts that do “lump” these things together, and even the text that Richlin goes on to discuss in this passage—Aristophanes' speech in Plato's *Symposium*—does not categorize male–male and female–female sexual desires together, against male–female desire, but rather treats all three of these instances of *erōs* as versions of the same thing (Halperin 2002, 68–71; *pace* Thorp 1992). Even granting Richlin's suggestion, such “lumping” does not indicate that the Greeks thought of such preferences as

constituting an identity that registers a psychosexual-behavioral condition rooted in “sexuality.”

Richlin makes this leap because she is willing to graft our modern terms onto examples from the ancient world where a (usually male) subject is said to have a sexual preference of some sort. So again: “And it would really be fair to say that Suetonius describes Claudius as a ‘heterosexual,’ Galba as a ‘homosexual,’ ... and Nero as a no-holds-barred omnisexual Sadeian libertine” (Richlin 1993, 532). The invocation of fairness is rhetorically intriguing; but Suetonius is recording preferences and behaviors, not creating categories of sexual identity or a psychiatric specification. Suetonius gives no indication that he shares our tendency to see sexual preferences as indicators of truths about the deep inner orientation of individuals. Once more: same-sex desire is not sufficient to identify homosexuality.

In other words, Foucault's claims rest on a specific and, I believe, correct understanding of the rise of homosexuality (and with it sexuality) *as a result of specific discursive practices that constitute individuals as subjects*. If one chooses to ignore the historical specificity argued for and documented in Foucault's work and in that of scholars such as Halperin, Winkler, and A. Davidson, so be it: there are always pleasures to be had in collapsing historical and cultural distance. But such acts of historical collapse will not help us to understand the history of sexuality or grasp the particularities of ancient Greek and Roman social life.

Love, not sex

The most recent and most outspoken critic of Foucault's work has been James Davidson, whose latest book is a 644-page attack on the model put forward by Dover, Foucault, and constructionist critics who followed them. Meticulously researched and learned, James Davidson wishes to shift the topic from sexuality to love.¹ For him, the active/passive model of ancient sex championed by Dover and Paul Veyne is particularly offensive, then, because it does not seem to him to capture the reciprocal affection that might exist in ancient man-boy relationships (see, e.g., J. Davidson 2007, 198). Implicit in this move, though not ever stated overtly, is the assumption that, *if* this reciprocity did exist, whatever the social structure of such man-boy relationships, it would mean that the ancient Greeks were “homosexual.”

Davidson's rejection of Foucault takes three somewhat contradictory tacks. In the first, he suggests that the Greeks were not engaging in homoerotic acts at all, and that the anal penetration that

is so prevalent in the secondary literature was the product of oversexed fantasy on the part of Dover and other scholars (J. Davidson 2007, 119). It is true that Dover often finds references to sexual acts in texts that are not explicit about them. There is a distinct reticence on the part of Greek orators to discuss exactly what went on between a lover and his beloved. Explicit sex is indeed lacking from Aeschines' *Against Timarchos*, for example; but, when Aeschines describes Timarchos as "this man with a man's body, who has committed womanly offences" (Aeschin. *In Tim.* 185), it is clear that what is referred to is the passive role in sex; and indeed Aeschines calls attention several times to the fact that he must speak in such euphemisms, as decorum demands (e.g. Aeschin. *In Tim.* 76).

Having ridiculed the idea that one's sexual position mattered in the ancient world, Davidson goes on (2007, 147) to argue against a constructionist view of ancient sex, suggesting that this insistence on roles is involved in a conspiracy to "marginalize Love"—by which he means homosexual love. Here Davidson commits the error of confusing *sex* with *sexuality*. He suggests, for example, that David Halperin has argued that "[s]exual attraction between people of the opposite sex was a product of culture, with no biological basis" (148; emphasis mine). But, although Halperin did maintain that it is meaningless to speak of heterosexuality (or homosexuality) in classical antiquity, Davidson misstates what Halperin has argued. Halperin is arguing about *sexuality*—which, again, is not the same thing as "sexual attraction," whether between members of the opposite sex or of the same sex; and Davidson's failure to understand this distinction renders his entire discussion of "Greek homosexuality" a red herring.

Davidson is most interesting, however, in his discussion of Foucault's theory of discourse. He traces the development of discursive theory, interestingly and sensitively, from its roots in linguistic anthropology through the development of structuralism, providing a reasonable enough definition of discourse in the process (J. Davidson 2007, ch. 6; definition at p. 187). He offers no argument against Foucault's postulation of the discursive creation of sexuality, though his discussion of it seems, at times, designed to discredit it through parodic description (e.g., 190).

In the end, however, Davidson finds Foucault's acceptance of the active-passive model unacceptable and discredits Foucault by ascribing to him ideas that he never expressed and, so far as I can tell, did not entertain:

there are times when he [Foucault] seems to think there is in fact another kind of truth somewhere else, an authentic truth hidden or disguised by the frameworks through which we see the world ...the

primordial experience of madness before it was captured by psychiatry, homosexuality before its capture by homosexuality. (J. Davidson 2007, 189)

This is pure fantasy.² What Foucault did outline was a series of *discourses about sex* in ancient Greece and Rome that differed from modern discourses; not a primordial, arcadian state, but a different and in some ways equally repressive way of thinking about the sexual world. It is Davidson, not Foucault, who wants to find a “pure” version of “homosexuality” in the ancient world, one in which lovers and beloveds really, truly cared about each other and in which reciprocity defined their tender, loving relationships—as if this alone would free the homoerotic sex from its ancient discursive bounds and its politics of gender, age, and social status.

Ironically, Davidson ends his chapter on Foucault's discursive method with a brief trip into psychoanalysis. Faced with the difficult question of how a scholar such as Foucault could have produced the volumes that he did, Davidson comes to two astonishing conclusions: Foucault wrote as he did because he was anti-semitic and because he was a closeted gay man (J. Davidson 2007, 200–4). Davidson's evidence for both propositions is distressingly thin and grossly distorted, but what really interests me is how completely and unselfconsciously he confirms the central thesis of Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, Volume 1. There Foucault argued that sexuality functions as *the* truth of the modern subject, as the ground of the subject's very being:

Thus sex gradually became an object of great suspicion: the general and disquieting meaning that pervades our conduct and existence, in spite of ourselves ...a general signification, a universal secret, and omnipresent cause, a fear that never ends. And so, in this “question” of sex ...we demand that sex speak the truth ...and we demand that it tell us our truth, or rather, the deeply buried truth of that truth about ourselves which we think we possess in our immediate consciousness. (Foucault 1978, 69)

For Davidson, Foucault's (allegedly closeted) sexuality has become exactly this sort of truth-producing truth, a fact that, once revealed, tells us all that we need to know about his scholarship. Davidson, however, seems unaware of the discursive function at work in his own reductive formulation (cf. Halperin 1995, 130–2).

Where Now?

Perhaps paradoxically, what all this means is that the discipline of classics has more to offer queer theory than the other way around. For, if Foucault's understanding of the modern discursive construction of sexuality is right, then it is a fruitless endeavor to continue scouring the ancient world for evidence of sexuality, whether in search of utopian proto-gay models or by arguing that homophobia was rampant among the Greeks. At the same time, by relieving us of the pressure to interpret ancient erotic life in modern sexual terms, Foucault also makes possible the kind of unprejudiced historical inquiry that classical philology has traditionally championed. In Foucault's work we have a useful model for analyzing Greek and Roman discourses *about sex* on their own terms (Halperin 1990, 68–71; duBois 1998, 98–100; Miller 1998, 202). But it will not enable us to discover that the Greeks were gay, straight, or bisexual: I believe this is a fruitless and ultimately distracting quest.

On the other hand, Foucault's analysis of particular moments of shift in discursive practice allows us to see the extent to which classical antiquity provides, in its alterity, a place to stand (intellectually, at least) and from which to observe our own world (see Halperin 1990, 70–1). And, despite the difficulty that Foucault's method presents for those seeking a universal blueprint for political action, change does occur. When we understand sexuality, not as a biological drive or as a desirable set of emotional reciprocities, but as an “especially dense transfer point for relations of power” (Foucault 1978, 103), then, as Foucault says, our analysis, though not separate from the discourse that produced it, can lead to “the possibility of a substantial shift in tactics” (130) in the struggle to end the repression and exploitation that are based on sexual identity. Indeed such shifts are ongoing, and it is beyond the ability of any person, institution, ideology, discursive practice, or academic discipline to stop them from taking place.

Guide to Further Reading

The work of Foucault is best understood by reading it; in addition to the three volumes of the *History of Sexuality*, Rabinow 1984 contains a useful set of interviews in which Foucault reflects on the *History*, and particularly on his shift in thinking between Volumes 1 and 2. Halperin 1990, Winkler 1990, Halperin, Winkler and Zeitlin 1990, and Detel 2005 all apply Foucault's methods to ancient texts with greater philological precision than Foucault. Williams 1999 provides an incisive and comprehensive description of Roman (as opposed to

Greek) sexual discourse.

The later work of Halperin (1995, 2002) is particularly helpful as an explication of Foucault's work in relation to modern understandings of sexuality. Arnold Davidson 2001 further bolsters Foucault's claims through detailed study of early medical and psychoanalytic texts, as well as of early modern works of art.

Trenchant criticism of Foucault, Dover, Halperin, Winkler, and their followers is abundant. Larmour, Miller, and Platter 1998 provides a series of important articles that attack various perceived errors or shortcomings in Foucault's work. Richlin 1993 and 1998 offer a critique from explicitly feminist grounds. Cohen 1991 brings sociological analysis to bear on ancient Greek sexual practice. Goldhill 1995 demonstrates Foucault's lack of attention to the playfulness of certain Greek texts, especially the ancient novels. Hubbard 1998 and 2000 argues that middle-class Greeks saw desire for boys as an aristocratic vice.

The recent work of James Davidson 2007 is immensely learned, but not well documented. In addition to the errors of method discussed in my chapter (above), Davidson 2007 has been shown to be seriously unreliable with regard to facts about Greek history and law and cannot be recommended for the novice reader.

Notes

1 Against which see Foucault 1984, 345: “But don't forget *L'Usage des plaisirs* is a book about sexual ethics; it's not a book about love, or about friendship, or about reciprocity.”

2 For an even more extreme fantasy construction of Foucault's thinking, see J. Davidson 2007, 197.

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Chapter 5

Greek and Roman Marriage

Allison Glazebrook and Kelly Olson

While Greco-Roman authors frequently disparage wives as unproductive, wasteful, lacking in self-control and thus untrustworthy, another tradition celebrates marriage as a cooperative partnership between a likeminded man and woman. The focus of marriage, however, was the production of legitimate heirs, and as a result the most commonly praised quality of the Greco-Roman wife was her sexual virtue. This trait gave a free woman social value, and also status within the community. The quality of such virtue was assessed through dress, deportment, and everyday behavior. The mythical/legendary accounts of Penelope, the wife of the Greek hero Odysseus, and Lucretia, the wife of L. Tarquinius Collatinus (one of the founders of the Roman republic), canonized female sexual loyalty within marriage as an important female trait and provided models for generations of Greco-Roman women. The association of women with wool-working meant that wool-working became symbolic of the good and sexually virtuous wife; listing this activity on a tombstone was high praise for any woman. The accounts of Penelope and Lucretia also show how female fidelity was important for a stable society and how its defilement was seen as violence against the entire community. The practices surrounding marriage and the marriage ceremony, however, varied temporally and geographically. While a romantic sensibility surrounds marriage in various periods, starting in classical Greece, the arranged marriage was the norm, at least in the upper classes. The focus of this chapter on classical and Hellenistic Greece and on republican and imperial Rome is necessitated by the evidence.

Greek Marriage in Archaic and

Classical Greece

Recent considerations of social status, domestic space, religious roles, and dowry suggest that Athenian wives were not so secluded and that the function of marriage in ancient Greece more broadly was not so diverse: marriage was primarily a transaction between men, the father of the bride and the future husband. Its main objectives were to transmit social identity and status, to maintain social networks (which were often based on kin), and to provide heirs through the production of children. It was regularly through marriage that free citizen women acquired a social role, privilege, and a sexual partner. Men's roles, in contrast, did not center on marriage, nor were men restricted to having sex with their spouse alone. Like women, men were monogamous, but just in the sense that they could have only one legitimate household and wife.

The bride (*numphē*) was young by modern western standards. In classical Athens the bride was typically under 15 years of age and generally inexperienced: according to Xenophon, Ischomachus claimed his wife was not yet 15 and had been brought up seeing and hearing nothing! (Xen. *Oec.* 7.5; see also Dem. 26.4, with 29.43). In contrast, the groom was around 30 years old, fully integrated into the political and economic life of the community, and vested with an independent social identity (Pomeroy, 268–9). The age difference between bride and groom ensured the husband was the authority figure in the relationship and the recognized head of the household. While the young bride did not exercise any choice in the selection of her marriage partner, the fact that grooms could be close kin—cousins, or even an uncle—meant that brides might be familiar with the groom prior to marriage. The production of Attic vases focusing on the theme of marriage suggests a romanticizing element to it from the mid-fifth century onwards. Such scenes depict the toilet of the bride, or the bride receiving bridal gifts. The common presence of Eros, the god of physical desire, and sometimes of Aphrodite suggests that Athenian culture expected the bride to embrace her marriage and to welcome sexual intimacy with her husband (Sutton 1992, 24–7; McManus 1990, 231).

In ancient Sparta brides were older, usually around 18 years of age, the groom being as young as 25 (Cartledge 1981; see Pomeroy 2002, 44). Here too marriages were arranged by men (but note Pomeroy 2002, 45–6). Once again, however, it was likely that Spartan girls knew the groom before marriage, in this case because Spartan girls participated in choruses in public festivals and seem to have had few restrictions on their movements (Pomeroy 2002, 44). The sources on Sparta indicate that sexual desire was an important element of the

marriage, and the *Partheneia* of Alcman reveal how girls were eroticized and their physical bodies put on display. According to Plutarch's *Life of Lycurgus*, such choruses were an inducement to marriage for young men (Lyc. 14–15; see also Stehle 1997, 30–9, 73–93). Claude Calame (1977, 400–20) argues that the *Partheneia* were homoerotic poems and prepared girls for marital intimacy by encouraging homoeroticism as a stage between asexuality and sexual relations with a husband.

Marriage followed by childbirth, not menarche, marked the essential rite of passage from *parthenos* to *gunē* (that is, from girlhood to womanhood). Menarche, in fact, was not necessary for marriage to take place in classical Athens. The Hippocratic prescribers prescribed marriage for premenstrual girls, who they believed were in a vulnerable state just before menarche and prone to violence, most frequently against themselves (King 1983). Menstrual blood unable to exit the body on account of a narrow opening pooled around the organs, causing erratic behavior. Sexual intercourse was the most effective way to bring release for young girls, since it widened the vagina and enabled the first menstrual flow (Dean-Jones 1991, 120–2). Marriage, more generally, was also seen as the most effective way to contain women and their sexuality. While self-control was a defining feature of the male citizen and something a man was thought to possess innately, a woman's nature was thought to lack it. Control of her desires had to be imposed from outside and achieved through guardianship and marriage, as well as through strict codes of behavior and veiling in public (Foucault 1985, 151, 165; Just 1989, 185–9; Winkler 1990, 49–50; Carson 1990, 142–5, 160–4).

Marriage in the classical polis was closely connected to social identity and status. In the Athenian democracy, citizenship was limited and protected because of the privileges associated with it. Over time, marriage became formally endogamic (from within the community) and thus central to determining citizenship status (Lape 2002/3, 127–9). By 451/450 bce, a new law required that only those born from parents who were both Athenian citizens (*astoi*) were eligible for citizenship ([Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 1278^a). Although the law does not mention marriage, marriage practices were affected, since unions between citizens and foreigners could no longer produce children eligible for Athenian status or rights of inheritance (Patterson 1998, 110). The law also brought public importance to Athenian women as wives and future wives, differentiating them from non-Athenian women (Osborne 2010, 262–5). By the fourth century bce it was criminal for a citizen to pass off a non-Athenian as a wife, or for a non-citizen to take an Athenian wife. Violations resulted in heavy penalties: the citizen was fined and the non-citizen sold into slavery

[[Dem.] 59.16–17). In classical Sparta it was a legal obligation to marry and produce children for the polis (Plu. *Lys.* 30; Cartledge 1981, 95). Plutarch also tells us that Spartiates who did not marry and were without children were denied certain privileges and open to ridicule (*Lyc.* 15). Cowards, on the other hand, were banned from marriage and reproducing, as were their sisters (Xen. *Lac.* 9). These examples demonstrate the connection between marriage and citizen status and the role of marriage in producing citizen offspring who would fulfill citizen obligations. Marriage and the Greek polis were thus intimately intertwined.

Marriage, however, was not a formal legal moment requiring registration with a governing body, but a series of events witnessed by family and the local community (Patterson 1991, 60). In archaic and classical Athens, it began with the betrothal—the *engue*—at which the father promised his daughter to her future husband. A responsible father invited guests as witnesses to the *ekdosis* (the handing over of the bride), who could be called upon later to legitimize a woman's status as wife and the status of any children. The wealthiest fathers also held a marriage feast (the *gamēlia*) for their phratry, thereby creating a large body of witnesses. Many citizens provided dowries for their daughters; but, despite arguments of the Attic orators disputing marital status on the grounds of no dowry, the dowry was not a requirement of marriage (Harrison 1998a, 48–9). It was in fact the daughter's legal inheritance and stayed with her even upon divorce (Foxhall 1989, 32). The setting up of a household together and the production of children were the final indication of marriage.

Since the main goal of marriage was the production of legitimate heirs, sexual virtue was the most important quality for women and any female sexual activity outside of marriage was a sexual transgression. In contrast, men were not limited to their wives as sexual partners but could acceptably engage in sexual activity with their own slaves, commercial prostitutes, and citizen boys (Dover 1973). Relations with another citizen's wife, however, constituted *moicheia*, commonly translated as “adultery.” Its thematic presence in literature and myth, for instance in Homer's *Odyssey* and in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, reveals that such illicit relations were not just a concern of a husband but affected the entire household and the community (Patterson 1998, 130–2, 138–57). For this reason adultery was severely punished (on laws for sexual offences, see Harrison 1998a, 32–8). We know from orators like Lysias that, according to the law of justifiable homicide, it was permissible for an Athenian husband to murder another man caught having sex with his wife. More commonly, at least in the classical period, the cuckold husband exacted a fine and corporal punishment (Lys. 1.29). The comic poet

Aristophanes mentions the humiliating and painful punishment of a radish up the anus of the *moichos*, as well as depilation (Ar. Nu. 1083–4, Ach. 849).

In such transgressions, the *moichos* was considered the active partner and the real criminal, the wife only taking a passive role as the victim of *moicheia*—the *moicheumenē*. Nevertheless, her husband would immediately divorce her and she appears to have lost any status and privilege due to her as an *astē* (a female citizen): she was not allowed to adorn herself and was banned from attending festival celebrations as well as all public sacrifices that even slaves and foreign women could attend. If she ignored these restrictions, any citizen could strip her of her clothes and jewels and beat her on the spot with impunity ([Dem.] 59.85–7; Aeschin. 1.183). It also appears from Plutarch's *Life of Solon* 23 that such women might be sold into prostitution (Glazebrook 2005). *Moicheia*, however, was not simply against a husband and the bonds of marriage, as adultery is understood today, but included sexual relations with a citizen's daughter or sister (Patterson 1998, 115–25; Cantarella 2005, 239–40; *contra* Cohen 1991, 100–9).

In contrast, Plutarch claims that jealousy, or even adultery, never existed at Sparta. In fact any citizen could have children with a married woman, as long as her husband agreed (Plu. Lyc. 15; and cf. Xen. Lac. 1). While it is clear from the sources that the husband must approve such a relationship, Spartan wives may have played an active role in attracting a second partner and benefited by gaining two households for themselves. Sarah Pomeroy calls this “husband-doubling,” in order to emphasize its advantages to women (2002, 40). The sources, however, also imply that such relations would constitute adultery if carried out without a husband's permission.

In Athens, the husband, wife, or father of the bride were all able to initiate divorce. Infertility was grounds for divorce, but couples might also divorce because of incompatibility. Law, however, required that a husband divorce a wife involved with a *moichos* (an adulterer), a wife whom he subsequently discovered to be *xenē* (a non-Athenian), or a wife found to be an *epiklēros* (an heiress) if he were not her nearest male relative (Harrison 1998a, 38–40). Upon divorce, a bride returned to her paternal household with her original dowry, regardless of the circumstances of her divorce (Harrison 1998a, 55–6). While a husband simply dismissed the wife from his home, the wife or her kin had to register the divorce with the *archōn*. Although the process allowed an Athenian wife to initiate a divorce, such divorce seems uncommon and in fact difficult for a woman to implement without the support of male kin (Harrison 1969a, 40–3). When the wife of the famous statesman Alcibiades went to the agora to register her divorce with

the *archōn*, Alcibiades physically carried her back home again, putting an end to her attempt (Plu. *Alc.* 8 and *Andoc.* 4.14). Husbands might be reluctant to divorce wives or to allow wives to divorce them, given the requirement that the dowry be returned. In cases of adultery, a husband might choose to ignore the offence in order to prevent questions regarding the paternity of any children (Omitowoju 2002, 123–6).

Imagery surrounding the wedding (*gamos*) relates to the earth and to death. The new bride is a field to be plowed: the father handed over the bride at the Greek wedding ceremony with the words, noted by the comic poet Menander, “I give my daughter to you for the plowing of legitimate children” (Men. Fr. 720 Kock; see duBois 1988, 39–43, 67–9). The mythical bride Persephone is out picking flowers when she is abducted to the underworld, to become the bride of Hades. The link between marriage and death is a noticeable theme in classical Athenian art and literature (Rehm 1994). The association between marriage and death was of course very real to ancient women, given the high incidence of death in childbirth. Marriage for the bride also meant the taking on of a new identity, and thus the death of her former self, followed by a rebirth (Foley 1994, 104; Jenkins 1983, 141–2).

Prior to the ceremony, the bride dedicated her childhood girdle to Artemis; she also gave other clothing, a lock of her hair, and girlhood toys to various other female goddesses, which signified her transition to adulthood. The marriage ceremony itself began with a sacrifice by the bride's father. It included a washing and purification of the bride and of the groom using water poured from the *loutrophoros*, a special vessel for bathing water. In Athens this water came from the Kallirrhoe drawn from the Enneakrounos. The ceremony further featured a feast at the childhood home of the bride, and then an evening procession with the bride and groom to their new home, accompanied by torches and singing; and this spectacle transformed the marriage into a public event (Oakley and Sinos 1993, 11–37; Rehm 1994, 11–18). Images on Attic pots show the bride, covered in a veil, along with the groom, both garlanded, processing from her childhood home to the home of her new husband. In black figure vases they are in a chariot or cart, and in red figure vases they are frequently on foot (for images, see Oakley and Sinos 1993, 43–128). Upon arrival, the groom led her by the wrist around the hearth of her new home. Of central importance to the marriage ritual was the *anakaluptēria*, the point at which the bride lifted her veil to gaze into the eyes of her new husband (Oakley and Sinos 1993, 25–6; Rehm 1994, 141–2. The action indicated her acceptance of the marriage and of her marriage partner (Carson 1990, 163; Patterson 1991, 54–5;

contra Llewellyn-Jones 2003, 245). The groom then led her away by the wrist, indicating his authority and role as husband. The bride and groom were expected to consummate the marriage that night, while guests sang *epithalamia* (bridal songs) outside their bed chamber. Over the course of the next day the bride received her father and other relatives arriving with gifts, as mistress in her new home.

Marriage in ancient Sparta was unique in a number of ways, but it is important to recognize that all accounts of Spartan marriage come from outsiders and are not always easily verifiable. According to Plutarch's account, the bride shaved her head and wore masculine clothing for the wedding. There are various theories as to the origins of such a tradition: it would have marked a rite of passage, signaled the full integration of women in the community, helped the groom transition from homoerotic relations to heterosexual ones, and/or kept off the evil eye (Pomeroy 2002, 42–3). The bride waited for the groom, alone in a room with a mattress. The groom entered covertly and “captured” the bride, having intercourse with her. It was with the birth of a child that the Spartan marriage became public and official. According to Plutarch (*Lyc.* 15), the marriage was initially kept secret, which perhaps enabled the couple to seek other partners if no child were produced (on the problems of this passage, see Pomeroy 2002, 42 and Cartledge 1981, 102). Unlike elsewhere in Greece, husbands and wives did not live together in the first years of marriage. The bride seems to have resided in her paternal household until the birth of her first child (Pomeroy 2002, 44). The husband lived in communal barracks with his fellow Spartiates until the age of 30. If he wanted to have intercourse with his wife, he was expected to conduct such relations clandestinely, at night, without anyone catching him. Even when freed from communal living, the husband continued to take his meals at mess rather than in his household. As a result, much of the responsibility of running the household rested with the wife.

The unique position of the heiress—known as *epiklēros* at Athens, as *patroikos* at Gortyn in Crete, and as *patrouchos* at Sparta—required special marital arrangements in these societies (Patterson 1998, 92–106). An “heiress” was a daughter in a family with no male issue, and thus with no natal or adoptive son upon the death of the father of the household. The heiress was thus attached to her paternal estate. At Athens, the heiress was required to marry her closest male kin, starting from her father's brother and his sons, but also including male kin on the maternal side. If the heiress and the closest male kin were already married to others, they had to divorce in order to enable their marriage to each other (Isaeus 3.64). In such marriages the husband had no claim to the property, which was reserved and protected for the future son of the heiress (Isaeus 10.12). The production of a male

heir was key to the marriage, and so men who were thought too elderly to produce children were passed over in favor of younger ones. The husband of an *epiklēros* was required by law to have intercourse with his bride at least three times a month (Plu. *Sol.* 20). The purpose behind what we would consider an incestuous marriage was the preservation of individual *oikoi* (estates). That marriage also ensured that the number of kin groups remained stable. Gortyn was similar to Athens in that the law dictated that an heiress marry her closest male kin, stipulating once again the preferred order of eligibility for the husband. It differed in that it only included members of the paternal line and, if no one was available, the next in line was someone from the father's tribe. Furthermore, the heiress was not forced to divorce, if she was already married; she could also refuse the marriage, only forfeiting a portion of the inheritance to the male kin if she had not yet produced an heir for a member of her father's tribe. Thus the emphasis was on the right of the *patroiokos* as heir and on the preservation of a patrilineal line of descent. In contrast, at Sparta the kings were the ones who decided on the groom for an heiress. Kinship did not restrict possible marriage partners for the *patrouchos* and as a result paternal lines and households could die out (Pomeroy 2002, 84–5).

Greek Marriage in Hellenistic Times

With the death of Alexander the Great came Hellenistic kings and kingdoms, bringing an end to the self-sufficient polis and the individual citizen's active political role. They also brought major changes to the institution of marriage. Polygamy among members of the ruling elite became a way to demonstrate political dominance and to foster international relationships (Ogden 1999). Monogamous marriage was still the norm for the majority; but, in contrast to archaic and classical Greece, marriage became equally a focus for men and women, as citizens looked to personal relationships to fulfill their needs. A new interest in male/female romantic love and in the desiring female subject in Greek literature by such authors as Menander, Callimachus, Theocritus, Herodas, and Xenophon of Ephesus signal this change (Skinner 2005, 151, 190; Lape 2004, 91–3, 96–9; Gutzwiller 1998; Richardson in this volume). For example, in the *The Lock of Berenice*, Callimachus celebrates the marriage of Ptolemy III and Berenice II as a love match seen from the point of

view of a lock of Berenice's hair, personified as a young maiden. While the poem supports the image making of the royal couple (Gutzwiller 1992), it also reflects or promotes a new expectation of marriage.

The mixing of cultures is also a factor in changes to Greek marriage practices. The campaigns of Alexander the Great enlarged the territory of the Greek world to include Egypt and the East, incorporating many different cultural groups. In ancient Egypt, for example, women historically enjoyed greater legal capacity and economic rights than Athenian and other Greek women did. Egyptian marriage contracts, for example, outline in detail the property rights of each partner and ensure the return of that property in the case of divorce, as well as stipulate the paying of additional monies should the husband leave his wife for love of another woman. Hellenistic Greeks living in Egypt adopted such contracts with some differences (see Delia 2000). The contracts include the value of the dowry, but not an itemized list of the property. They do, however, include a clause about the upkeep of the wife or a monetary fine if the dowry is not immediately paid in full upon divorce. The contracts also prescribe equally harsh penalties for both partners in case of sexual transgressions (P. Eleph. 1, from 311 bce). Hellenistic Greeks in Egypt also stipulated, in marriage contracts, the role of husband and wife and the circumstances of divorce. In one contract the wife is not allowed to sleep away from her husband, while the husband cannot keep another woman as concubine or a boy lover (P. Tebt. I 104, from 92 bce). It appears that female emotions and economic rights were now recognized as valid in Greek marriage and in divorce proceedings.

Roman Marriage

Roman women tended to marry in their middle to late teens—earlier if they were from the upper class—while men married in their late twenties—again, earlier if they were of the nobility (see Treggiari 1991, 398–403; Saller 1987, Shaw 1987, and Shaw and Saller 1984 use mainly epigraphic evidence; for a less convincing argument for earlier age at marriage, using mainly literary evidence, see Lelis, Percy, and Verstraete, 2003). The legal age of marriage for girls was 12, the age at which the Romans thought menarche occurred; the girl was said then to be *viripotens*, “capable of receiving a man” (Treggiari 1991, 39–43). But a betrothal (*sponsalia*) could happen very early on, even when the couple were infants, although Augustus limited the length of a betrothal to two years (see Treggiari 1991, 134–60; Hersch

Consent of the parties involved (including the *pater*) was needed for a marriage to occur (*Dig.* 23.1.9–18. For the girl, this consisted merely of not protesting her father's (or her mother's and father's) choice of husband; although a woman's consent was formally required, it did not necessarily follow that her feelings were consulted or her opinion solicited. Legitimate grounds for protesting were in fact few—if the intended spouse was of a debased character, for example. Widows and divorcées probably had more choice in the matter: Tullia and her mother arranged her own second marriage to Dolabella (*Cic. Ad. Fam.* 3.12; Treggiari 1991, 170–80).

For the upper classes, a *digna condicio*—a suitable match—was the aim; an unequal match would disgrace the better born partner (see Treggiari 1991, 83–124; 229–61). Roman marriage had little basis in romantic love or in sexual attraction; rather marriage and the procreation of children were seen as social duties. First, marriages between upper-class families at least were usually arranged, and romantic love was therefore a negligible factor, although it should not be discounted altogether, as there was the very real possibility of matrimonial devotion after marriage.

Although this was not a legal requirement for marriage, many Romans felt a strong social obligation to provide a dowry (*dos*) for the bride when she wed. This is in part because, without a dowry (that is, money or property given to the groom by the bride's family), the union could appear to be one of concubinage or living together (Treggiari 1991, 323–64; Gardner 1986, 97–116; Evans-Grubbs 2002, 91–8). Dowry took the form of any number of different things (money, property, slaves); but generally it was a sum of money that the wife brought with her to the marriage to help support the household—the property of her father (*dos profecticia*) or other party/relative (*dos adventicia*)—sometimes payable in installments. In the event of the dissolution of the marriage it would have to be returned to the wife or to her family. The husband was legally entitled to keep part of the dowry (a *retentio*) under certain circumstances such as the wife's sexual misbehavior, or if there were children of the union (see below).

After a *coniunx* had been found and the betrothal arrangements made, it was necessary to start planning the actual wedding (Treggiari 1991, 161–70; Hersch 2010). Marriage was a private matter, requiring no state ratification or religious validation; an actual wedding ceremony was not needed to legalize it. *Affectio maritalis*, “intent to be married,” was all that was required (but see Hersch 2010, 51–8). For most aristocratic Roman couples, however, the ceremony was a visible and a practical rite, which proved the legitimacy of the union. Although we know many details of the wedding ceremony, we must

be careful to note that all such niceties probably did not occur all the time; and of course noble families would have the means to include more of them (Hersch 2010, 15–19; Treggiari 1991, 161).

The bride's attire, like that of today, was special and probably worn only once (Hersch 2010, 69–114; Olson 2008, 21–5). Her *flammeum*, flame-colored veil, was the most symbolic thing she assumed (Hersch 2010, 94–106) and was one of the main emblems and components of the wedding ceremony, routinely mentioned by many authors. The long veil was transparent and matched her *lutei socci*, yellow shoes. Yellow was a quintessentially female color in antiquity because the dye was made from saffron, the stamens of crocus—a plant material also used to remedy female ills such as menstrual pain (Sebesta 1997, 540 n. 33). Her gown was a *tunica recta*, a white tunic that had been made on an old-fashioned upright loom (Hersch 2010, 108–9), and a *cingulum*, girdle (109–12). Rich brides would certainly wear jewels. The bride's hairstyle was called *tutulus*. The hair was first parted with a *hasta recurva* or *hasta caelibaris*, a bent iron spearhead (Olson 2008, 23–4), and then divided into *seni crines*, six locks, and fastened with *vittae*, fillets, in a *meta*, cone, on the top of the head (Hersch 2010, 73–80, 84–9; Olson 2008, 22–3); unfortunately no readily identifiable artistic depictions of this hairstyle exist. On top of her head, under the veil, the bride wore a wreath of flowers and herbs (Hersch 2010, 89–94). She was dressed by her friends and female relations and thus provided an opportunity for emotion, advice, and good wishes (Hersch 2010, 71–2).

The first part of the ceremony took place at the house of the bride's *paterfamilias*, who paid for the wedding (Hersch 2010, 113–34). But mothers hosted as well. A wedding invitation from the third century ce reads: “Herais requests your company at a banquet in celebration of the marriage of her children at her house tomorrow, the fifth, at nine o'clock” (P. Oxy. 11 G). Friends and clients gathered in the house, which was decorated with greenery and flowers. The bride's parents would hand over the bride to the groom. The *pronuba*, matron of honor, would then join the couple's right hands (Hersch 2010, 190–212; this was the *dextrarum iunctio*). The new couple would offer up a sacrifice, usually a pig. The *tabulae nuptiales*, marriage contract, which had been drawn up beforehand, would be presented by the *auspex*, the priest who was there to take the omens, and then the contract would be signed by the required number of witnesses. The guests called out *feliciter!* (good luck!); the *cena*, wedding banquet, paid for by the groom, was eaten; gifts were given; and preparations for the wedding procession were made (Hersch 2010, 212–19; Treggiari 1991, 165–6).

The procession moved from the bride's home to the couple's new home (Hersch 2010, 135–90, 220–6; Treggiari 1991, 166–8); Roman

marriages were *neolocal*, meaning the bride and groom lived in their own house rather than moving in with extended family. Walnuts were thrown, symbolizing the hoped-for fertility of the bride. The bride or her attendant would carry a spindle and a distaff, which symbolized her role as a weaving wife; the groom and guests took part in singing obscene (“Fescennine”) verses and lighting the torches. When the procession arrived at the groom's house, the bride rubbed the doorway with fat and oil and wreathed it with wool, reinforcing her role as wife. She then crossed the threshold very carefully or was even carried over in some instances (by her attendants), since it was unlucky to trip on her way into her new house. *Epithalamia*—wedding songs—were sung at this point, to encourage the couple to consummate the marriage.

As marriage was a basis for the procreation of children, it would follow that consummation and the first sexual union of the new couple would be an important part of the ceremony. The marriage chamber was decorated with symbols of fertility: flowers, greenery, and fruit. For the first time that day, and maybe ever, the couple was alone, though the revelry would continue outside the house. The next morning, the new bride emerged from the bedroom a *matrona*, a wife, and made the first offering to the *lares* and *penates*, the ancestral gods of her new home (Johansson 2010, 136–47). The days after the wedding were usually a round of visiting, parties, and dinners.

As mentioned, legal marriage was a matter of intent (*affectio maritalis*). But not everyone in Roman society could contract a legal marriage. Capacity to marry legally was inhibited by age and consent, but also by status: under the laws of Augustus (Treggiari 1991, 60–80; Gardner 1986, 31–44), senators and senatorial women were banned from marrying freedmen or freedwomen, actresses or actors, prostitutes, pimps, or gladiators (*Dig.* 23.2.44, 25.7.1, 25.7.2; Evans-Grubbs 2002, 143–50). Slaves could not marry (but see Hersch 2010, 29–33); nor could soldiers, until the time of Emperor Severus (193–211 ce; Evans-Grubbs 2002, 158–9; but see Allison 2011). Officials in Roman provinces could not marry provincial women. Often of course such groups formed monogamous, long-lasting relationships, complete with cohabitation and children; still, this was not a legal marriage in the eyes of Roman law. Capacity to marry was also affected by kinship: the pair could not be related within a certain degree (prohibited degrees included adoption, except by imperial dispensation; Evans-Grubbs 2002, 136–43). Thus first cousins could marry; brother and sister could not. Marriage between uncle and niece was legal after the Emperor Claudius. Finally, to marry legally, one needed to be possessed of the *ius conubii* (“right of marriage”: Treggiari 1991, 43–9; Hersch 2010, 20–2; Gardner 1986, 31–8), the

privilege of Roman citizens and of some Roman allies. Not having the *ius conubii* meant that (1) one could not legally marry in Roman law; and (2) if one did cohabit and produce children, Roman law recognized neither the union nor the children as legitimate (that was the case of Anthony and Cleopatra in 34 bce, for instance).

In the early republic the normal form of marriage was *cum manu* (“in the hand”: Gaius, *Institutes* 1.108–18; see Treggiari 1991, 16–32; Hersch 2010, 23–7; Dixon 2011, 253–4; Gardner 1986, 11–18)—that is, the wife passed into the *potestas* or power of her husband. This meant that her property and anything she later acquired became the property of her husband (or his father); but she had rights to succeed him, and these were equal to her own children's rights. On the other hand, by marrying this way, she lost any rights of succession in her natal family. *Manus* marriages came about in three ways: by *coemptio* (a “marriage by purchase,” involving a formal ceremony); by *confarreatio* (a religious ceremony, probably utilized for marriages of priests such as the *flamines*); and by *usus*: that is, if a woman or her *pater* intended her to be married with *manus* yet she did not go through one of the formal ceremonies, a year of cohabitation produced *manus*. Marriage *cum manu* appears to have disappeared by the end of the republic—and probably even before that, although it is referred to by Cicero quite casually.

Sine manu marriage (“out of the hand”: Treggiari 1991, 32–6), however, also existed quite early on. Roman law gave the husband no rights over his wife's property in a *sine manu* marriage apart from the *dos*, which was his by law. The wife continued to own, inherit, and bequeath her own property (if she was *sui iuris*—that is, if her father was dead), with the help of a *tutor*, a financial guardian. In the principles of Roman law she was related by lineage neither to her husband nor to her children, but “remained” in her natal family.

The Augustan legislation on marriage consisted of two sets of laws: the *Lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus* (18 bce) and the *Lex Papia Poppaea* (9 ce; see Evans-Grubbs, 2002, 83–7). Codifying what was likely to have been social convention, these laws were aimed at promoting marriage and children, chiefly among the upper classes. Unmarried women between 20 and 50 years of age and unmarried men between 20 and 60 were affected. Widows had to remarry in one year (later on, two); divorcées had to remarry within 6 months (later on, 18; no such time limits were imposed on men). The principal penalty was a ban on receiving legacies, except for those from close relatives. But there were some notorious cases of non-enforcement even within the imperial family: Antonia Minor, for example, was a widow for many years (Val. Max. 4.3.3).

Many marriages were likely to have been dissolved through the

death of a spouse, due both to low life expectancy generally and to the age hiatus between the spouses at the time of marriage (Treggiari 1991, 398–403; Gardner 1986, 50–6; Evans-Grubbs 2002, 219–69). In addition, divorce was easy and perhaps frequent. Divorce, like marriage, was a private act and required only the intention not to stay married (on divorce, see Treggiari 1991, 435–82; Gardner 1986, 81–95; Evans-Grubbs 2002, 187–202). No legal ratification of a divorce was necessary; nor did either party have to have “grounds.” The husband or wife usually informed the other orally or in writing of their intention (a *repudium*), but receipt of a *repudium* by the other party was not necessary for a divorce to be valid: thus women could divorce and remarry when their husbands were missing in action overseas. Although either the husband or the wife could end a marriage (and, until Marcus Aurelius made it illegal in the late second century ce, also the father of either), wives could not prosecute their husbands for adultery (see below). Legally the children stayed with the husband in the event of a divorce, which may have given some wives pause for thought when considering divorce: no Roman law set out visitation or custody rights and privileges for the mother, nor was there any court of family law as there is today. Children staying with the father may not have happened all the time, however, and no doubt some Roman couples came to their own arrangements.

Our written sources have more to say about adultery than about any other sexual transgression because of upper-class horror about introducing a spurious child into the agnatic line (Treggiari 1991, 264–98; Gardner 1986, 127–36). In the republic, adultery had been handled within the family: by a woman's husband or father of the family, or by a family council. But Augustus passed the *Lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis* (“*Lex Iulia* on restraining adulterers”) in 18 bce, as part of his program of moral reform. The laws on adultery did not apply symmetrically to both sexes. *Adulteria* was defined as “sex with a married woman”; the status of the man was irrelevant. A husband could therefore prosecute his wife for adultery, but she could not do the same, as in the eyes of law he had not committed any offense against their marriage. A wronged wife could, however, still obtain a divorce. As for the lover, public opinion in all periods held that extra-legal punishments were perfectly legitimate: the man could be beaten up by the husband, anally raped in various ways, urinated on by kitchen slaves, perhaps even castrated, in addition to being brought into court. If he was of low social status and the pair were caught in the woman's matrimonial home, the husband could kill him (but he could not kill his wife, or else he would be liable for homicide). The husband must then divorce his wife without delay, or he could be subject to a charge for *lenocinium*, pimping. A father could kill a lover

of whatever status whom he caught in the same situation, but he had to kill his daughter as well (*Dig.* 48.5.21–5). The penalties for convicted adulterers were severe (see McGinn 1998, 140–247): a stiff monetary fine, *relegatio* (temporary exile), and various legal disabilities. Women convicted of adultery in the strict sense (that is, caught in the act) could not remarry freeborn citizens, and thus they could not receive outside legacies. We may assume that the primary purpose of the Augustan legislation was to protect and police those in the upper classes, as the penalties would be felt mainly by the wealthy.

Remarriage seems to have been frequent. The nature of the arranged marriage, an easy process of divorce, and the high incidence of spousal death in Roman antiquity facilitated the frequent discontinuance of old or politically disadvantageous alliances for the formation of new kinship ties, at least in the upper classes. The social pressure to marry was strong, probably inescapable in Roman society, and there were financial incentives for those in the upper classes, as we have seen (Treggiari 1991, 473–82). Widows, widowers, and divorcées (especially young women who had had children) tended to remarry after the death of each husband, some two or three times in succession, producing the dissolution and reconstitution of family units (Treggiari 1991, 501–2). This “serial monogamy” or “serial remarriage” was given legal enforcement in the Augustan marriage legislation of 18 bce and 9 ce. Kin networks, the stable “nuclear” family, and heirship strategies became remarkably complex when divorce, widowhood, and remarriage intervened to produce blended families—as in today's society.

A broad examination of marriage in the ancient Greek and Roman worlds brings to light certain regional variations (between Athens and Sparta, for instance) and some amount of chronological variation (between classical and Hellenistic Greece). The differences between Greek and Roman marriage also become clear: the capacity or incapacity of women to own property, or the institution of the *epiklēros* (not present in Rome). Roman women seem to have had more say in the choice of partner in their second or third marriages than Greek women did. But there are many similarities too: for instance the institution of arranged marriage for men and women in the upper classes, or the fact that many such marriages often took the form of a transaction between men. In both Greece and Rome we see marriage linked with citizen privilege and status, and we find the production of legitimate citizen children to be the goal of marriage; nor was a dowry or a marriage ceremony required for a union to be legitimate and recognized. The ease of divorce meant that old ties could be dissolved and new ones formed (despite the ideal of the

univira in Roman society). Most importantly, though, the emphasis on containing women's sexuality within marriage meant that both societies had extensive and detailed adultery legislation. Women are praised in both societies for staying within their allotted sexual sphere—the home—with devotion to husband, offspring, and chastity.

Guide to Further Reading

Oakley and Sinos (1993) are the best source on the Greek wedding ceremony. For the legal aspects of Greek marriage, see Patterson (1998). Pomeroy (2002) is the most comprehensive work on marriage in ancient Sparta. On the *numphē* and on marriage as a transition to adulthood, see King (1983). Treggiari (1991) is the classic work on all aspects of Roman marriage, and highly recommended; this chapter is based in large part on that admirable work. Hersch (2010) covers the wedding ceremony itself in splendid detail. Corbett (1930) and Gardner (1986) represent excellent work on marriage law. Dixon (2011) presents a synthesis of the bibliography on Roman marriage and changes in the sorts of questions scholars ask. Lovén and Strömberg (2010) is a series of interesting essays on various details of ancient marriage. Leftkowitz and Fant (2005) and Evans-Grubbs (2002) are valuable collections of sources for both Greece and Rome. Although early Christian marriage and family are not covered in this chapter, Balch and Osiek (2003) is an excellent volume of collected essays.

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Chapter 6

Prostitution

Thomas A. J. McGinn

Introduction: Problems of Evidence

Writing in Carthage in the early third century, Tertullian complains that Christians are being (unfairly) persecuted and hence are vulnerable to extortion, especially but not only on the part of soldiers. Worse, perhaps, they find themselves classed together with some rather unsavory characters as they are forced to pay “protection money” in order to escape harassment, at the least, from the authorities: “I don't know whether to be sorry or embarrassed, when, on the registers of the *beneficarii* and *curiosi*, among the innkeepers, porters, bathhouse-thieves, gamblers, and pimps, Christians too are listed as ‘liable for payment’” (Tert. *Fuga* 13.3 = CCSL 2.1154–5).

The fact that pimps find themselves on the same soldierly lists as Christians should provoke the interest of students of ancient prostitution. The text is in fact an important piece of evidence on this subject, but it yields its true significance only with difficulty. Pieced together with other sources, it contributes to a narrative that begins with the introduction of a tax on prostitutes and pimps by the Emperor Caligula in 40 ce. The responsibility for collection was (to all appearances, soon) afterwards transferred from civilian tax collectors to the military, at least where soldiers were available to collect it, evidently because the huge returns to the treasury necessitated a greater concern with security and the soldiers were familiar with practitioners of venal sex (see Suet. *Calig.* 40, with McGinn 1998, ch. 7).

Tertullian's evidence, along with other sources, shows that, despite

evidence that might suggest abolition immediately after Caligula's reign, the tax continued to be collected into the third century. The passage also contributes something to our understanding of the complex marginality experienced by practitioners of prostitution. There can be no question that collection of the tax legitimized commercial sex to a degree—this is precisely why some Christian emperors had an interest in doing away with it. At the same time it is clear from Tertullian's comments that prostitutes and pimps, even in the context of the tax's collection and of the (perhaps) minimal level of toleration this implies, were placed at the very margins of Roman society.

In what follows we will have an opportunity to ponder both the intractability of the evidence for ancient Athenian and Roman prostitution and the value of the insights it offers. The challenges and rewards come into stark focus once we engage some of the recent scholarly literature, which has seen a remarkable growth in the last few decades. For sheer reasons of space, my survey is a highly selective one.

Athens

One of the most prolific contributors to our knowledge of Athenian prostitution in recent years has been Edward Cohen. In numerous books and articles Cohen has advanced a view of prostitution in classical Athens that is singular in the scholarship on the sale of sex for that time and place, and unusual in the broader context of the historiography on this subject for other historical periods. Simply put, Cohen argues that the Athenians did not stigmatize prostitution as a profession but allowed it to be practiced freely, as an independent enterprise.

For all its importance, Cohen's argument has received relatively little reaction, positive or negative, in the scholarship. The most sustained critiques known to me are that of de Brauw and Miner (2004, 307–11)—who focus on prostitution contracts, claiming, wrongly in my view, that these did not in fact concern prostitution; that of Gagliardi (2006, 118–20)—who argues that prostitution itself was fundamentally illegal at Athens (distinctly a minority view; see also Gagliardi 2005, 91–3); and that of Wrenhaven (2009, 381–4)—who, correctly, criticizes Cohen's view that prostitution was not socially stigmatized. An overall lack of engagement can of course be taken as a sign of disapproval, and it is clear that Cohen's views have been controversial. It is worth noting, however, that those who have

reacted—usually in more general fashion—to Cohen's work have for the most part taken a nuanced view of it, rarely (if ever) verging on a total rejection of his views.¹ For some time we have been promised a book solely dedicated to the subject of Athenian prostitution (Cohen forthcoming); and, in anticipation of this development (which is something devoutly to be wished), I believe that this is a good time to take stock of Cohen's challenging thesis. My aim is not to refute, or even to offer a thorough criticism of, Cohen's views, but instead to set forth what I perceive to be their strengths and weaknesses by way of suggesting why historians of ancient Greece should pay more attention to them.

Why is Cohen's work on Athenian prostitution so important? A first reason is the absolute seriousness with which he regards his subject. It is obvious that he believes prostitution to be essential for an understanding of Athenian social and economic life. Sex for sale explains something fundamental about that society, how it was structured and how it operated. Not all historians would agree, however—to judge from the recent *Cambridge Economic History of the Greco-Roman World* (Scheidel, Morris, and Saller 2007), in the 942 pages of which prostitutes and prostitution receive only scattered mention and do not merit an entry in the Index. Of course, in terms of scale, venal sex can have occupied but a small place in the economies of Greece and Rome, which were overwhelmingly agricultural in nature. To all appearances, however, it was widespread, freely available, and an important object of investment as well as a source of profit for members of the upper classes. In other words, it seems to have constituted an important aspect of the service sector in both societies.

Cohen's views on prostitution are embedded in a series of larger propositions regarding the nature of the Athenian economy and society. In fact, in important respects, the overall thesis predates his interest in prostitution (it appears in embryonic form in Cohen 1973, 114–29; see also, for example, Cohen 1992, 73–82; Cohen 1994; Cohen 1997; and compare Cohen 2002). One key aspect of this broader perspective is the argument that ancient Athenian society was far more inclusive than many scholars assume. Cohen focuses chiefly on three groups—metics, slaves, and women—in an attempt to show that they were far from being utterly marginalized. Eventually prostitutes came to be added to this list.

Cohen's views on prostitution may be fairly characterized as “liberal” in the division—which has both political and scholarly implications—between liberal and radical feminist perspectives on venal sex (see McGinn 2004, 71–7, with literature; see also McGinn 2011, 268 n. 28). Briefly put, the debate turns on whether prostitution

is inherently degrading to prostitutes—so the radical feminists—or merits recognition as a legitimate way of earning a living—so the liberals. One manifestation of these differences is that liberals tend to use the phrase “sex worker,” while radicals prefer the term “prostitute.”

What follows can barely begin to take on board all of Cohen's views regarding prostitution in classical Athens, let alone his broader thesis on economy and society. I shall limit my observations to three areas, all of which concern law in its social context. First I discuss the laws repressing procuring and *hubris*; second, the law on contracts for prostitution; and, third, the laws prohibiting prostitutes from participation in various aspects of public and especially political life. On my reading, Cohen's views emerge as correct on many points of detail and plausible in some of their main lines of argument. At the same time it is possible to see how one might use the foundation he has laid to develop a view of Athenian prostitution that is somewhat darker than the one he upholds.

Repression of procuring and hubris

Cohen views these laws as offering protection to prostitutes. As so often with Athenian legislation, there is great uncertainty over their wording, meaning, scope of application, penalty, and purpose. At least some of this indeterminacy he argues to have been deliberate, in that the vagueness of a law's potential application was meant to serve as a deterrent to misbehavior (Cohen 2007, 209–13); this does not mean, of course, that its application was infinite, even in theory. To begin with the anti-procuring statutes, there were evidently two of these: one that punished procuring practiced by anyone, and a second one that punished procuring practiced specifically by an authority figure. In both cases prosecution was punished through *graphē*—that is, through a written indictment available to all (male) citizens as potential prosecutors. The sources offer no information about the penalty applied in cases falling under the second statute (except that a son who had been exploited was not obligated when grown to support his father: Aesch. 1.13) and only contradictory information regarding the first, “general” law: Aeschines (1.14) implies it was death and (perhaps) confiscation of property, while Plutarch (*Solon* 23.1) mentions a fine of 100 drachmas in the case of rape and of 20 drachmas in the case of seduction.

Cohen emphasizes that the law does not seem to have defined the offense it punished, *proagōgeia*. This vagueness facilitated actual or potential application to situations that were perhaps not at all

contemplated by the lawgiver. The word itself implies “procuring,” and if rape and seduction were included from the start, as seems likely, a broad scope seems foreordained. For Cohen, “this statute offered a basis for criminal prosecution of anyone who dared to involve himself or herself in *any* aspect of the commercial provision of sex by free women or free youths—other than the self-employment of offering one's own body for sale” (Cohen 2007, 209). He insists, in other words, on the intervention of a (third-party) pimp in order to create liability; but this would hardly be relevant to many cases of rape or seduction by “clients” (cf. Glazebrook 2005, 41–2).

Despite some ambiguity, it seems clear that the law protected free women (and presumably girls) as well as free boys, which means evidently that adult males and slaves of both sexes did not fall within its ambit—a point accepted by Cohen (2007, 209, 213). Plutarch (*Solon* 23.1) also claims an exemption for prostitutes, “except those who sell themselves openly, meaning precisely the *hetairai*. For these women openly go to those who pay them.” The language of the passage is broad enough to accommodate both clients and actual pimps, if any. Cohen dismisses this evidence as “bizarre” (Cohen 2007, 212), as well he might—it contradicts his contention that the law protected prostitutes. While the fact that the statute did not protect slave prostitutes weakens his argument, this evidence, I believe, effectively counters it.

Plutarch shows that the point of the law was in fact to police the boundary between the respectable and the non-respectable. Anyone who lured, compelled, or somehow transposed a free female or boy from the former category to the latter was liable to prosecution (I note that the information about liability regarding boys derives from Aeschines 1.14). The same is true of the other anti-procuring statute, which punished, again through *graphē*, the hiring out of a citizen boy (that is, a minor) by a father, uncle, brother, guardian or any authority figure: both the procurer and client were liable (Aeschin. 1.13). With regard to the “general” law, Plutarch supports my argument that its purpose was to police this boundary when he declares (*Solon* 23.2) that it prohibited anyone from selling (or perhaps “turning out”) a daughter or a sister unless he should discover that she was sexually experienced (Glazebrook 2005, 45–7 rightly insists that the “selling” here refers to prostitution). Presumably, with regard to the exception, the seducer would then be liable, at least in theory; but the point is that subsequent sexual partners—as well as pimps—of such a woman would not be vulnerable to a charge of *proagōgeia*.

So one could safely patronize a brothel without fear of prosecution. The women working there as prostitutes, whether they were slave or

free, offered clients sex that was exempted under the law. It would presumably be relatively easy to show that slave women, girls, or boys working in brothels were in fact prostitutes if any question arose and for some reason it was a challenge to prove their status precisely as slaves. A similar point holds for slave prostitutes not working in brothels. One notes Plutarch's emphasis on prostitution occurring "openly." This suggests that the law took no interest in sex with women, girls, or boys who were manifestly prostitutes. It punished neither their rape nor their seduction. Sex with a free prostitute, certainly outside a brothel, might at times be problematic, not only for a pimp but for a client, and for the latter above all in the absence of a pimp. Where a free female or boy was not known to be a prostitute, it might be difficult for a client, if accused of *proagōgeia*, to prove the status of his sexual partner as one, the most obvious defense to this charge.² We shall return to this problem below. It is worth pointing out that a man "caught" while having sex with a woman, neither his wife nor his concubine, who he thought was respectable might have more than one thing to worry about.

With regard to *hubris* ("outrage," "affront"), a similar problem of scope presents itself. The law again did not define the offense, leaving the door open to a broad application, broader in some ways than we see with the crime of procuring. Rape, certainly, and seduction, presumably, were pursuable; the ground of liability for the latter may be what Aeschines refers to when he repeatedly (mis)characterizes prostitution as *hubris* (1.72, 87, 90; see also 163, with Fisher 2001, 223; see further Gagarin 1979; D. Cohen 1991, 176–80; Fisher 1992, 41, 53; Gagliardi 2006, 116–17). Prosecutions for *hubris* were, like those under the anti-procuring laws, conducted through *graphē*; moreover, they had to be heard within 30 days from when the charge was initially laid, an unusually expedited procedure. Penalties were assessed upon conviction and might include fines, imprisonment, or perhaps even death. Enforcement upon conviction was designed to be relatively aggressive. The law punished offenses, however defined, that were committed against adults and children, free persons and slaves (Cohen 2007, 213–18).

The challenge in this case lies less in Cohen's (plausible) reconstruction of the facts than in his interpretation of them. Particular care must be taken with regard to the exuberant self-congratulation we see manifested, for example, in the claim that the regime for *hubris* demonstrated the Athenians' *philanthrōpia* (see Dem. 21.48–9). Another difficulty arises with a text that purports to quote the law (Dem. 21.47), which has been strongly attacked as a forgery by Harris (2008, 103–4; and see also Faraguna 2009).

The same society that celebrated its treatment of slaves tolerated

not just slavery and prostitution, but specifically the prostitution of slaves (for skepticism about the effective protection of slaves under this law—something especially justified, in my view, in the case of direct sexual exploitation of slaves by their masters—see Todd 2006, 104–5). Here Cohen persuasively negotiates a potentially serious problem: how to reconcile the evidently widespread recourse to slave prostitutes with the existence of this law. He points out, correctly, that prostitution was lawful and that owners could assign slaves to work as they saw fit. If this meant selling sex in a brothel or elsewhere, a master could not be prosecuted for *hubris* (Cohen 2007, 218).³ As Cohen concedes, there might have been cases of egregious abuse that, at least in theory, would allow the law to be invoked against slave owners themselves. Those who outraged the property of others were more likely to find themselves vulnerable to suit, however. In principle masters were left free to exploit their slaves, even—or especially—sexually. So in prostituting them they could not be prosecuted under either this law or the anti-procuring statutes, on any theory. This meant that clients of slave prostitutes were safe from prosecution on the same terms.

This reflection sheds light on what I view as the purpose with regard to slaves underlying the law on *hubris*. The point was to protect the interest of masters in a valuable asset category. Here it is useful to draw a distinction between safeguarding the interests of individual masters and those of masters as a class. Typically these coincided; but where they did not, as in the case of a master who allowed a slave to be egregiously mistreated, the interests of the group trumped those of the individual owner. This protected the institution itself against the consequences of irresponsible actions of individuals, a fact that suggests that the law did not aim at safeguarding individual interests as much as social ones, though in most cases the two might be reconciled. Another bonus was that the law allowed Athenians to feel a certain moral justification as slave-owners. In this regard, they are far from being an isolated example in the historical record.

Since, as far as we know, the law did not specifically exempt prostitutes, the absence of such a provision raises the question of whether paid sex with free persons could be construed as *hubris*. This seems possible, at least where the status of such persons as prostitutes might be open to doubt. This challenge is addressed in the next section.

Although prostitution was not a principal concern of the law on *hubris* in the same way as slavery, a similar general point can be made. The law did not aim to protect the interest of the exploited, but that of the class of exploiters. If this meant that occasionally the former did receive some protection (the law appears rarely to have

been used in practice: Gagarin 1979), that was perfectly tolerable, particularly insofar as it enabled Athenians to rejoice in their “humane benevolence.”

Contracts for prostitution

Cohen begins a recent article with these assertions: “Modern Western values denigrate prostitution as morally degenerate and humanly exploitative. But at Athens a prostitute often enjoyed esteem as a practitioner of a ‘liberal profession’ (*eleutherios technē*, ‘an occupation appropriate for a free person’).”⁴ Here we have the conclusion, and in a certain sense the premise, of an argument in which the following syllogism seems to be advanced: the Athenians respected the self-employed and despised wage-earners; prostitutes were allowed to make agreements, as were other self-employed workers, who are identifiable as “liberal” professionals; therefore “a prostitute often enjoyed esteem as a practitioner of a ‘liberal profession.’” I must leave it to others to unpack this logic and instead focus on an important corollary of the argument, namely that the contracts made by free prostitutes with their clients demonstrate the independence and esteem they enjoyed. For Cohen, these agreements show that, contrary to some modern assumptions, prostitution at Athens, at least as practised by free Athenians (if not by slaves and metics), was not exploitative in nature; more than that, he takes it to help prove the existence of a sort of neo-classical economic model for that society (see Cohen 2000a, 178–9).

It is unclear to me why the legal capacity to make a contract would demonstrate any such thing, since the motives for making contracts, as well as the circumstances in which they are made and enforced, would seem to be at least as significant. Were they enforceable? Aeschines plausibly asserts that, in practice, they were not (and, less plausibly perhaps, that an attempt on the part of a client to enforce such a contract would itself be construed as *hubris*: Aeschin. 1.160–4, with Fisher 2001, 306–11). And if slaves could make contracts, as Cohen himself argues they did (Cohen 1992, 73–6), this does not support the idea that this practice can by itself serve as a guarantee of independence, esteem, or freedom from exploitation. Further, even if it is true (and this is hardly to be assumed) that “consensual arrangements for sexual services did not evoke moral outrage at Athens” (Cohen 2000a, 185), it does not follow that prostitution is least exploitative where it is most accepted. Where prostitution operates without legal or moral constraints, the opposite seems in fact to hold. In other words, even if we accept, with Cohen, that the

Athenians did not condemn prostitution in the same way as “modern Western conceptualizations” do, this does not mean that prostitution in that society was not exploitative in nature. So we must not assume, as Cohen does (for example at 2000c, 131–2; 2006, 99–100, 116) that measures tending, deliberately or not, to legitimize the practice of prostitution—like the tax on prostitution, the legal protection accorded prostitutes’ fees, or the story, true or not, of Solon’s establishment of a brothel—were inconsistent with an overall devaluation of its practitioners in social and legal terms (see McGinn 2011, 257–8, 265, 266).

On the evidence as presented by Cohen, only free prostitutes working outside of brothels made such contracts. There is a quibble over the status of one of them, Theodotos in Lysias 3, who may have been a citizen or a metic, but probably not a slave (see Cohen 2000c, 128; Todd 2007, 279–81). Neaira, whose status was precisely the focus of dispute, made agreements for sexual services after manumission, if Apollodorus is to be believed about any of the relevant details, which are not crystal clear (see [Dem.] 59.29–40, with Kapparis 1999, 227–51). In any case, no such agreements are attested in contemporary sources for prostitutes who are certain to be slaves, although there is evidence of agreements between free persons aimed at the sexual exploitation of slave prostitutes (see Cohen 2000b, 112–14; Cohen 2005, 56; Todd 2007, 280, 366). Whatever advantages contracts held for the one group ought to have held for the other, at least in theory. Why do only free prostitutes seem to have made contracts?

A possible answer emerges from the discussion of the two types of law in the previous section. As seen above, sex with slave prostitutes did not, as a matter of law, create liability for clients under the statutes against procuring—nor in principle under that against *hubris*. For the first type of law, the same holds for free prostitutes, but the challenge of proving the status of a free person as a prostitute, especially one working outside of a brothel, might have suggested the advisability of securing this proof in advance, through a contract. The contract perhaps further insulated the client from a charge of *hubris*—an evidently greater risk, at least in theory—by showing that the agreement was made with an actual prostitute who granted legally valid consent to sexual relations, sex that might otherwise be construable as *hubris* (see Cohen 2000c, 120 for possible instances). Yet another purpose might have been to serve as a shield against liability, in its various forms, for adultery. To judge from the representations Apollodorus makes in his attack on Neaira ([Dem.] 59.41–2, 64–71), apprehension over this matter was widespread in classical Athens, perhaps prompting risk-averse clients to seek a

contract in advance, at least with free prostitutes working outside a brothel, unless their status as prostitutes was beyond serious doubt (see [Dem.] 59.67, with Kapparis 1999, 311–13).

In other words, such agreements were designed to protect clients (and, just possibly, pimps) and hence were presumably concluded at their behest. This would explain the various formalities associated with such agreements, if we can believe Aeschines about these (1.160, 165). It is also perfectly consistent with his assertions that such contracts were in practice unenforceable. But, if a client's actions went beyond what the contract allowed, he might be liable on a charge of *hubris* (see [Dem.] 59.33–7). No source tells us precisely what the purpose of these agreements was, so that this explanation must remain a hypothesis, but I would argue it to be more persuasive than the idea that prostitutes sought them in order “to manifest their autonomy” (Cohen 2006, 109), let alone that they testify to the “esteem” in which prostitutes were held, or even to their independence or freedom from exploitation.⁵

Ban on political participation

A law forbade (male citizen) prostitutes from speaking in the Assembly and from holding various public offices (Aeschin. 1.19–20). Other civic disabilities were perhaps imposed as well, including a ban on entering temples and the agora, so that it is open to question whether (male citizen) prostitutes suffered partial or full *atimia*—that is, loss of civic rights (see MacDowell 2000, 20–4).⁶ No punishment accrued unless a prostitute tried to exercise a forbidden right, in which case he might be prosecuted through *graphē*. Upon conviction, he was sentenced to death and (perhaps) confiscation of property, as Aeschines seems to imply (1.20). A second law established *dokimasia*, a procedure designed to stop an alleged (male citizen) prostitute from even attempting to exercise a forbidden right; this is invoked by Aeschines in *Against Timarchos* (Aeschin. 1.28–32; see also MacDowell 2005, esp. 84–6; Todd 2006, 96–100). Only male citizen prostitutes were addressed by these laws; metics, slaves, and women were excluded from exercising most of these rights as a matter of course.

As might be expected, Cohen downplays the scope and significance of these rules. “The only juridical disincentive to sale by *politai* of their own of their own sexual services [was] a rarely enforced exclusion from leadership roles in political activities” (Cohen 2000a, 158).⁷ At the same time he claims that this measure shows that citizen prostitutes were common: “legal scholars have long insisted that the adoption of proscriptive legislation is almost always an indication of

the prevalence of the banned activity: legislative attention is seldom devoted to phenomena unknown or rare within a particular community” (Cohen 2000a, 174). Whoever these authorities are (Cohen does not name them), they may be safely ignored, since the reverse is too often true, especially in contexts involving the repression of sexual behavior. To take an ancient example, in 19 ce the Roman Senate banned senatorial and equestrian women from practicing prostitution, simply because one such woman registered as a prostitute, in a (failed) attempt to avoid prosecution under the Augustan adultery law (McGinn 1992). For a modern instance we can cite the hysteria surrounding “White Slavery,” which led to the passage of the Mann Act in the US Congress in 1910 (see McGinn 2008, 9, with literature). It is unwise to attempt to read social practice in such a straightforward way from the law, particularly in this area.

In a recent article (2010), Adriaan Lanni places the laws against political participation in the context of anxieties about homosexual pederasty, which began to manifest themselves in the mid-fifth century. The laws may reflect a tendency to conflate pederasty with prostitution, as she argues, and/or they may represent the fruit of a political compromise that sought to repress an aspect of the former deemed to be particularly objectionable (Lanni 2010, 55 suggests that the offense punished under the laws might have been construed even in the absence of payment). Another concern might have been with the upward social mobility of sub-elite persons, including some perhaps perceived to be associated with prostitution, if not actual prostitutes themselves, in the wake of the beginning of the Peloponnesian War and with the advent of the plague, in the era of the “new politicians” (see the classic study by Connor 1992). In any case, Lanni argues (2010, 59–65) that the laws' impact was broader than the few cases of prosecution of which we know;⁸ of course, we can hardly be sure we know of them all), because the laws, which did not ban pederasty (any more than they banned prostitution), altered its social meaning by associating it explicitly with dishonor, in an evident expression of community sentiment that resonated beyond the application of these statutes, certainly their most obvious application. Lanni's thesis has its attractions, not least because it asks so little of the modern observer. We are not obliged, for example, to believe either that citizen prostitutes were common or that prosecution under these laws was infrequent. Examination of these questions may in future proceed independently of assumptions tied to the content of this legislation.

I acknowledge that this brief survey has done no more than to skim the surface of Cohen's complex and important views on Athenian prostitution. It would be profitable, for example, to examine them in

light of current controversies on the subjects of *hetaira* vs. *pornē* and of the representation of prostitutes on vases and in literature (see McGinn 2011, 260, 261–2, 264; add to the literature cited there Gilhuly 2009 and Wrenhaven 2009). His argument that Athenian attitudes and/or policy regarding prostitution underwent a profound change in the fourth century merits further consideration (see, for example, Cohen 2000c, 187–9; Todd 1994, 134–5; Wallace 1997). We may debate their numbers, but in the wake of Cohen's efforts no one should doubt the presence of citizen prostitutes in classical Athens. Also important is the nature of the marginality to which prostitutes were subjected. Even if, in my view, Cohen has not succeeded in placing them at the center of that society, he has made a very strong case that they did not fall utterly outside of it. And if we distinguish, as Cohen himself generally does not, between prostitutes and prostitution itself, there is good reason, thanks in no small part to his work, to believe that, at a minimum, the latter was linked to concerns that lay at the heart of the Athenian system of social values, constituting an important element of the ideology of that community.

Rome

Over the last decade, Kelly Olson has developed a thesis about Roman clothing and its social context that in general terms makes the following—unexceptional, indeed familiar—points.⁹ Clothing was an important symbol of status for the Romans. It was often usurped by those undeserving of the particular rank it signified. Paradoxically, it was sometimes shunned by those with a right to wear it. Clothing regulations were not systematically enforced (see the classic study by Reinhold 2002). Olson's approach has the merit of devoting particular attention to an examination of women's clothing and its social implications with reference, above all, to their status as respectable women, prostitutes, or adulteresses. In this context she engages with an argument I make about the regulation of clothing in Augustus' adultery law, the *lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis* (18/17 bce). The issues in play go to the heart of concerns about the nature and reliability of the evidence we possess for ancient prostitution.

One of Olson's fundamental points about the literary and visual evidence is that much of it is “prescriptive” (2002, 392). For clothing to reflect social practice, Olson demands absolute consistency. “The combination of *stola*, *palla*, and fillets [was] by no means ubiquitous in portrait busts, statues, and reliefs,” so that in particular the *stola* and *vittae* (fillets) associated with the respectable woman “are seldom

found in the visual record.” Since representations of women wearing these items, above all the *stola*, are not far to seek in the context of this evidence, what she seems to be saying is that not every representation of a Roman woman shows *all* three and some do not show any of them, and therefore we can conclude that many Roman women did not wear such clothing. This slippage from “prescriptive” to “descriptive” analysis (or the reverse) is characteristic of her handling of the evidence.

The discussion moves to direct consideration of the evidence for the clothing of prostitutes and adulteresses. Here I must raise an objection to the author's preference for the word “whore” to describe now one, now the other of these types. The Romans did indeed regard both types as “whores,” but we must be careful to distinguish the two where possible, even as we recognize the tendency of the ancients to collapse these categories.

This point is central to the argument I make about the adultery law's regulation of clothing. Simply put, I argue that an association of prostitutes with the toga predated Augustus and that the writer(s) of the *lex Iulia* seized upon this association, as part of a more general configuration of the *adultera* as *meretrix*, in order to compel adulteresses, and perhaps prostitutes as well, to wear the toga, in the latter case transforming a customary association into a legal requirement. Further, I argue that, under the same statute, prostitutes were forbidden to wear the garb—above all the *stola*, the *palla*, and the *vittae*—of respectable women, the *matres familias/matronae* as conceived by the law, while the latter were perhaps forbidden to wear prostitutes' clothing—at minimum their toga. Respectable women were prohibited from appearing in public without a *stola* and so on through a senatorial decree passed in the reign of Tiberius, which established the same penalty for its violation as for criminal fornication (*stuprum*) under the adultery law. I do not argue that all prostitutes, either before or after the passage of the law (or all adulteresses, after Augustus), actually wore the toga; far from it.¹⁰

A series of considerations supports these arguments. First, Augustus is well known for his regulations regarding clothing, which are amply attested for male garments (see McGinn 1998, 154–5; 2008, 5–6). It would not be surprising to find indications that he attempted to regulate dress for women as well, especially in the context of a law, the adultery statute, that stood for the Romans as a women's law par excellence. We begin with the abundant evidence for the law's configuration, mentioned above, of the adulteress as prostitute (McGinn 1998, 156–71). This is supported by another status, invented by the *lex Iulia*: the complaisant husband configured as pimp, whose crime, *lenocinium*, was thereby identified with the activity of the *leno*

or commercial pimp, even as we have reason to think they were not, as a rule, quite the same thing. The law further contrasts the status of adulteress it contrived with that of the respectable woman, whether married or unmarried, taking a traditional contrast between *meretrix* and *mater familias* (or *matrona*) and enshrining it in legislation. Finally, there is the curious fact that all of the unambiguous evidence for adulteresses wearing the toga postdates the law, whereas we have evidence linking prostitutes with this garment from both before and after the passage of the *lex Iulia*.

All of this in my view makes the argument that the law mandated the toga for adulteresses likely, and the argument that it also prescribed this for prostitutes possible. Olson's objections are based on fundamental misunderstandings of the evidence in question. These include her assumption that the relevant evidence is almost exclusively prescriptive in nature, a further assumption that literary evidence cannot be probative for law, and some elementary errors about what the evidence actually says.

First, despite Olson's repeated assertions about the prescriptive nature of the evidence (see Olson 2002, 392, 396), it is clear that much of this is not prescriptive, at least not in the way she assumes. For example, Martial and Juvenal do not in any serious sense prescribe the toga for adulteresses and prostitutes but simply assume the association in order to make some other point, often a joke at the expense of someone alleged to be sexually promiscuous (e.g., Mart. 2.39, 10.52, Juv. 2.68–70). The association of this garment with that status was so close that, for prostitutes, *togata* came to mean precisely “prostitute” (Adams 1983, 340). Horace draws a distinction, when writing of possible sexual partners for his male audience, between the *matrona* and the *ancilla togata* (“slave-woman in a toga”: *Sermones* 1.2.63; some scholars think three options are presented, *matrona*, slave, and prostitute; but, *pace* Olson 2002, 407–8, *togata* cannot mean “adulteress” here, nor was every sexually exploited slave a prostitute). The association between toga and prostitute is confirmed by Sulpicia's use of it in her poetry (see Keith 2008). Since this link operated, for obvious reasons, only for female prostitutes, it could be invoked to play on gendered behavior. So, when Cicero accuses Antony of behaving exactly like a female prostitute, he claims that Antony converted his *toga virilis* into a *toga muliebris* (Cic. *Phil.* 2.44–5). Again, these sources cannot truly be said to prescribe the toga for either group of women; they simply take its use by them for granted. No other item of clothing had such a close association with either group, despite a great deal of speculation by Olson about Coan silks and such.

Olson argues (2002, 392–6) that few (if any) women associated in the ancient sources with *stola* or toga actually wore these garments. It

is good to keep in mind that in fact we have very little evidence of actual Roman clothing, but many more representations of it, verbal and/or visual. Such evidence is ill suited for drawing airtight conclusions about what most Romans in general, Roman women, or types thereof actually wore. The proper position on this subject should be agnosticism. Here we must draw a distinction, however, between agnosticism over the mere fact of use and agnosticism over its frequency. The former seems to me rather extreme, but the latter entirely appropriate.¹¹

It is a bit odd to find Olson reading actual prescriptive (or satiric) evidence as descriptive, as she does with Seneca's denunciation of the use of cosmetics by women (2002, 398). One might argue that Ovidian elegy only pretends to be didactic, but this does not necessarily enhance its value as description (ibid.). As for Juvenal, it is remarkable to find a twenty-first-century scholar writing, as Olson does (2002, 395–6): “Messalina gilded her nipples and wore a blonde wig on her nightly shifts in the brothel.”

Martial has a character in an epigram refer to a eunuch wearing a toga as a “convicted adulteress” (Mart. 10.52: *damnata moecha*). This shows that the toga was considered appropriate for such women, and other authors are even more explicit on the point, including Juvenal, Tertullian, pseudo-Acro, and Porphyrio. It is reasonably clear from these sources that this was a penalty imposed by a law. For the reasons adduced above, I argue that the legislation in question was precisely Augustus' adultery law. For Olson, all of this evidence is inadmissible as evidence of law, because it is literary rather than legal in nature. She makes this point repeatedly, sometimes going as far as to deny the existence of such evidence in any form:

there is no specific evidence in these passages that the adulteress or the prostitute was “compelled” to wear the toga, as is often asserted by modern authors. The presence of *damnata* in Martial Epig. 10.52 and Juvenal, and *convicta* in the scholiasts on Horace does hint at this, but there is no extant Roman law stating that assumption of the toga was part of the penalty for a *matrona*'s conviction of prostitution [*sic*: Olson must mean adultery here; prostitution was not a criminal offense at Rome]; nor is there any edict that states that a common whore had to wear the toga. (2002, 394–5; note omitted).

This is an untenable position for an historian to take. If this were the standard, we would know next to nothing about Athenian law, for example. There would be no chance of using Cicero as a source for Roman law; or Plautus, Livy, or many others, including Tertullian. A glance at any of the standard references for Roman legislation, such as

the classic work on *leges* compiled by Rotondi (1990), suffices for us to see how, with many of these, we depend on literary sources for some or all of our information. Even in the case of private law, we must rely on such evidence for much of our knowledge.

This hardly means that such evidence is free from problems. Tertullian is a good example. There is no doubt that his work is full of prescription, yet it also contains a rather surprising amount of information on Roman law, as has long been recognized. This is true to the extent that it has been debated for centuries whether the author of the *De cultu feminarum* (see 2.12.1 = CCSL 1.367) and of the *De pallio* (see 4.9 = CCSL 2.745) is the same person as the jurist of the same name. In recent years the pendulum has swung in the direction of declining to identify the two, while recognizing that Tertullian possesses a knowledge of Roman law that is both broad and deep, which qualifies him as a kind of amateur expert on the subject (see McGinn 1998, 160–1; Chapot 2005; Randazzo 2005; Wilhite 2007, 20–2). At stake here of course is a factual question of legal history, not a technical legal problem. In the first passage just cited Tertullian attributes to *leges* a ban on the adoption by prostitutes of matronal garb; evidently this is a manifestation of rhetorical amplification (in my view, the most likely explanation). In the second passage, Tertullian speaks with greater precision of a *senatus consultum* passed in the reign of Tiberius forbidding *matronae* from appearing in public without a *stola* and so on. For various reasons this strongly suggests that the Augustan adultery statute regulated women's clothing in at least some of the ways I have described. There is no good argument for dismissing this evidence out of hand.

It might be useful to suggest why references to the requirement that adulteresses and perhaps prostitutes wear the toga are not found in our legal evidence. A passage by Isidore of Seville (19.25.5) indicates that by his day such usages were long in the past. In fact several centuries pass between Porphyrio and Isidore without attestation of the practice for either group. It cannot be certain that the female toga survived even into the third century. At some point it ceased to be worn, to be sure, and its disappearance would explain why mention of it was omitted from the *Corpus Iuris Civilis* by Justinian's compilers. In fact there is scant evidence for any penalties under the *lex Iulia* in that collection. The best explanation for this omission is that, after the introduction of the death penalty for adultery (probably in the fourth century), discussion, for example, of toga wearing by convicted adulteresses came to seem rather beside the point. A similar sartorial rule for prostitutes could not have survived very long after this development, if it had in fact lasted until that time.

All the same the status of the *lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis* precisely as a criminal law merits some reflection in the context of Olson's discussion. As Edmondson points out (2008, 41–2), “it is puzzling how after citing the scholion of Porphyrio she can claim (p. 394) that ‘there is no specific evidence ...that the adulteress or prostitute was “compelled” to wear the toga.’” Olson also has difficulty comprehending how law, even a criminal statute like the Augustan law on adultery, can “compel” anyone to do anything, since for her the word implies a one hundred per cent rate of compliance, nothing less. That this is an unhelpful way of looking at the problem of enforcement is something I have addressed in general terms elsewhere (see McGinn 2008; Olson is not alone in this error: see Croom 2000, 92–3). Relevant to this point is Olson's assertion (2002, 404): “Augustus enacted legislation forcing men to assume the toga (Suet. *Aug.* 40).” Here Olson uses a literary source to demonstrate the existence of a law that is otherwise not attested, in language very similar to that which I use for the adultery law and the toga. Perhaps, to her, “forcing” means something different from “compelling,” or for some reason she believes that this law was absolutely successful in fact. I doubt one can safely assume either to be true, however.

Olson recognizes the importance of a *Digest* text that discusses liability, under the delict of *iniuria* (“affront”) in case of what we might call “sexual harassment,” for a man who, under certain circumstances, interferes with a respectable woman who is not dressed in the clothing appropriate to her status but in that of a slave, or even of a prostitute (*Dig.* 47.10.15.15). Olson cites this text repeatedly (see Olson 2002, 397; 2006, 197; 2008, 51). The analysis reads the same in each version, with minor changes in wording (notes omitted):

This passage indicates that matrons and whores were ideally sartorially distinct from one another but also strongly suggests that such was not always the case. And, for what it is worth, Labeo was a lawyer of Augustan date, a time in which old-fashioned clothing distinctions were supposedly of great importance. Perhaps the visual markers of whores and matrons were not quite as clear-cut as most literary sources suggest. The *Digest* passage does not specifically mention the toga as a prostitute's garment, and also implies that not every matron wore the dress of a matron. (Olsen, 2008, 51)

We find the familiar confusion over what constitutes prescriptive and descriptive evidence. It is, all the same, rather curious that Olson assumes that literary sources generally fall into the former category and legal ones into the latter. This assumption helps explain another error: that of taking the repression of a phenomenon as an index of its frequency (on Cohen, see above, at n. 7). We find again insistence on

perfect compliance with a norm, not in order to guarantee its effectiveness (as elsewhere), but in order to accept its sheer existence.

There is more here to reflect upon. It does not always emerge with such lucidity elsewhere in Olson's work that "most literary sources suggest" that "the visual markers of whores and matrons were ...clear-cut." Her attribution of *Digest* 47.10.15.15 to the Augustan jurist M. Antistius Labeo is a serious error. It was written by the Severan jurist Ulpian, as part of his commentary on the praetor's edict. No one has until now suggested otherwise, and it is unclear on what basis Olson assumes that Labeo was its author. Specific allusions to the prostitute's toga and the matron's *stola* in this text may have been removed by Justinian's compilers. We cannot be certain of this, but by the same token the passage cannot be used to show that neither garment was worn at the time Ulpian was writing—the early third century, two centuries after Labeo. In fact we know from another *Digest* text that Ulpian regarded the *stola* as a garment typical of the respectable Roman woman (*Dig.* 34.2.23.2).

It is worth posing a question Olson does not raise, namely why the Romans imposed the garment that served as the most obvious symbol of male citizen status on female prostitutes and adulteresses, that is, on types ranking among the most marginalized of women. Davies (2005) argues that the *toga virilis* underwent a makeover under Augustus, emerging as bulkier, with richer drapery patterns, and so evidently more manly, in Roman terms, than its republican antecedents, which were less easily distinguishable from women's dress. Not seeing a connection with the adultery law, Davies offers two explanations for the wearing of the toga by prostitutes and adulteresses: first, that it was traditional, and, second, that it was designed to discourage its use by respectable women.

The evidence, as I have argued, supports a traditional association with the toga only for prostitutes. The most obvious explanation is a broadly anthropological one, namely that the wearing of this garment marked female prostitutes as marginal, precisely as disgraced *women*, since in theory they enjoyed the same sexual freedom as males. The *lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis* mandated its wearing by adulteresses for the first time, and perhaps ordained this for prostitutes as well; it may also have forbidden its use by respectable women. The point was to create a unitary category of disgraced women, populated by adulteresses and prostitutes. Their togas were distinguished both from the republican model(s) and from the upgraded Augustan manly version through color, being dark rather than white (the *toga pulla*: see [Acro], *Ad Horatii Sermones* 1.2.62–3). Davies' argument for an Augustan makeover of the *toga virilis* raises the possibility that the republican type was now reserved for prostitutes and adulteresses, no

doubt in the name of tradition, given its already existing association with the former group. The (now) exclusive official link of the republican toga with this statutory category of disgraced women might have encouraged respectable males to resort to the new imperial version. The association both advanced the values the regime sought to promote and represents a familiar Augustan “return to the past” through a redefinition of both that past and the relationship of the present to it.

In this matter of women's clothing, the stakes are, I believe, anything but trivial. Scholars of ancient sexuality should want their work to be taken seriously by more “mainstream” scholars (even, dare we dream, by economic historians). This dictates a great measure of rigor in the analysis of admittedly difficult evidence. We must be cautious not only with our use of the ancient sources but with the assumptions that drive it. It is idle to speak of the usurpation of clothing as a status symbol when it is assumed that there was nothing really there, in terms of law or social usage, to usurp.

Guide to Further Reading

Cohen 2006 is a useful point of entry into Cohen's work on Athenian prostitution, the emphasis being placed here on its economic role; Cohen 2007 focuses more on the status of prostitution under Athenian law. Davidson 1998 is an engaging study of Athenian discourses about food, drink, and (especially) sex that examines contemporary ideologies aimed at exploiting and/or controlling pleasure and their political implications. Henry and Glazebrook 2011 is a wide-ranging collection of essays that offers access to recent work on Greek prostitution. Lanni 2010 provides an interesting discussion of the subject from the perspective of “expressive law” theory.

McGinn 1998 is a study of the legal rules affecting the practice of female prostitution at Rome from approximately 200 bce to 250 ce. It examines the formation and precise content of the legal norms developed for prostitution and for those engaged in this profession, with close attention paid to their social context. McGinn 1997 discusses legal rules from several of the same areas of the law, but from a later period, ranging from the mid-third to the mid-sixth centuries. McGinn 2004 is a study of the evidence for the business of prostitution in the Roman world during the central part of Rome's history, a period extending from approximately 200 bce to 250 ce. The main focus is on the economics of venal sex: precisely the manner in which it was sold, a subject that extends to the ownership,

operation, staffing, and location of brothels, as well as to various aspects of non-brothel prostitution. Flemming 1999 takes on the task, difficult given the state of the sources, of paying heed to the perspective of Roman prostitutes themselves.

Notes

- 1 See Bertrand 2001; Engels 2001; Blanshard 2002; Couvenhes 2002; Harris 2002, an exception in the sense of verging on total rejection; Weiler 2002; Chankowsky 2003; Gagarin 2001, who complains that Cohen's opinions are ignored by the other contributors to the collection under review, even as he differs radically from them; Hermann-Otto 2003; Oliva 2006; Lape 2010, esp. 7–8, 20, 46–50, 194; cf. Duploux 2004. Writing before Cohen had published extensively on prostitution, De Noia 1996, esp. 51–66, has interesting comments on the marginal status of prostitutes, despite a less than adequately critical approach to the sources.
- 2 Aside from brothel prostitutes, anyone identifiable as a payer of the Athenian tax on prostitutes might so qualify. Cf. Nowak 2010, 186–7; I think it useful to distinguish the issue of identification from that of definition in this context: for discussion (with further bibliography) of these problems, see McGinn 2011.
- 3 On cases of *hubris* committed by authority figures within families, see Fisher 1992, 88–92; see Pl. *Euthphr.* 3E–4D, where a son prosecutes his father for the murder of a dependent.
- 4 Cohen 2005, 39 (cf. 2003, 214), with a footnote omitted; none of the evidence cited shows esteem for prostitutes for any reason.
- 5 See now Wrenhaven 2009, 381–4. I note that de Brauw and Miner 2004, 310–11 raise the possibility that the contracts might indeed have offered protection from suits on *hubris*, while arguing that these agreements concerned not prostitution, but exclusive, non-commercial pederastic relationships—an idea for which there is not a shred of evidence, as they admit.
- 6 For a recent discussion of the development of *atimia* over time, see Wout 2011, a number of whose conclusions I do not share.
- 7 For a more general criticism of Cohen's treatment of law, see Herrmann-Otto 2003, 495.
- 8 See Aeschin. 1; Ar. *Eq.* 876–9, with Lanni 2010, 57, who cites a few cases where prosecution was threatened.
- 9 Olson presents her views in a series of contributions that progressively diminish in size, although the core arguments remain

unaltered (2002; 2006; 2008, 47–51). In what follows I focus on the first of these, because it presents the fullest inventory of sources and arguments among the three.

10 In what follows I can only skim the surface; for more evidence and discussion, see McGinn 1998, 156–71.

11 For the *stola* and male toga some more might be said (see Edmondson 2008, 38–9). For the female toga I would be willing to speculate that more, perhaps many more, Roman prostitutes wore this than any garment made of Coan silk.

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Chapter 7

Ancient Pederasty

Andrew Lear

Introduction

The word “pederasty” comes down to us from ancient Greek *paiderastia*, a compound of *pais* (boy) and a derivative of *eran* (to love), meaning “love of boys.” It refers to the ancient Greek custom of erotic relations between an adult man, referred to as the *erastēs* (lover; plural *erastai*), and an adolescent boy or youth, referred to as the *erōmenos* (beloved; plural *erōmenoi*) or *paidika* (boyish things, neuter plural). Pederasty (in this sense) was an important focus of cultural attention in ancient Greece, as is shown by both art and literature. There is also historical evidence, including graffiti praising handsome boys and speeches from trials involving pederastic relations. Pederasty was regarded by Greeks (Herodotus 1.135) and by non-Greeks alike (Williams 2010, 68–9) as a hallmark of Greek culture. Evidence also indicates that it was not only tolerated but the object of considerable social esteem. Approval was, however, not always unmixed: at times pederasty was viewed with concern (“problematized,” as Foucault put it), and possibly with disapproval by certain social groups.

This chapter will discuss the main sources of evidence in roughly chronological order and will consider some of the principal questions they raise: when the custom originated; when it ended; where it was practiced; who was supposed to participate; what elements, erotic and non-erotic, their relations were supposed to include; and the limits of social approval. These issues are uncertain because, although relatively abundant, our evidence is scattered over time and place, often fragmentary, frequently without context, and biased in various, often elusive ways.

Sources of Evidence

Homer and prehistory

Greeks of later periods generally believed that the Iliadic heroes Achilles and Patroklos were a pederastic couple.¹ Modern scholars generally regard this as anachronistic.² Some, however, believe that Greek pederasty developed out of erotic relations between soldiers and that Achilles and Patroklos represent the custom's prehistory.³ Others believe that there were adolescent initiation rites involving pederastic sex in prehistoric Greece.⁴ Pederastic relations are central to a number of myths, which some argue follow the pattern of initiatory cult.⁵ The most widely represented of these myths is that of Zeus and Ganymede;⁶ another example is the story of Poseidon and Pelops (Pindar, *Olympian Odes* 1.36–88).

There is in fact some archaeological evidence for initiation rituals involving pederasty in the eighth–seventh centuries. Several sculptures excavated at a sanctuary in Kato Syme in Crete may represent initiator/initiand couples. One is particularly convincing: it is a double statuette representing two largely nude ithyphallic male figures, an adult and a boy, holding hands ([Figure 7.1](#)). There is also a group of inscriptions on the island of Thera, a Spartan settlement, behind the remains of the temple of Apollo Karneios, several of which refer to penetrative sex between males. There has been much debate over whether these inscriptions record sacral relations or obscene boasts.⁷ One, however (*IG* 12.3 537a), reads: “By Apollo Delphinios, Krimon here penetrated the son of Bathykles and the brother of [illegible name].” There are no Greek parallels for the invocation of a deity in an obscene boast; thus the initiatory explanation is more plausible.

Figure 7.1 Double statuette of an adult/youth couple from Kato Syme, Crete, geometric period.

Source: photo from Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Athens, neg. no. 2000/18.



Our information about Sparta is scanty, and much of it derives from Athenian sources. Several sources indicate, however, that pederasty played a role in the Spartan education system for boys (Xen. *Lac.* 2.12–14, Plu. *Lyc.* 17–18, and Aelian 3.10; Cartledge 1981, 19–23), which many have seen as constituting a multi-year initiation system (Brelich 1969, 29, 113). We have even less information about Crete, but a fragment from the historian Ephoros (70F 149 *FGrH*, preserved at Strabo 10.4.21) describes a ritual involving pederastic relations. Although only especially selected boys took part (rather

than all the boys of a certain age class), the ritual has many hallmarks of initiation. The boys underwent a stylized kidnapping, after which they spent a period outside the community, hunting or learning to hunt in the company of their kidnappers/lovers, to then return to the community, where there was a ceremony at which they received a series of prescribed gifts—a drinking cup, a bull, and a military outfit—that some have seen as symbolizing their changed status as men ready to drink at the *sumposion*, sacrifice, and fight in war.⁸ All of this evidence is from the classical period or later. Nonetheless many have connected it with the evidence from Thera and argued that Greek pederasty originated in initiation rituals. The fact that our evidence for such rituals comes from Sparta and Crete has led to several different theories. Some argue that pederasty developed in these two culturally linked, conservative Dorian centers and spread from there.⁹ Others (Bremmer 1980, Sargent 1986b, 7–39 and 1986a) claim, on the basis of scattered reports of pederastic practices in Germanic tribes (see for instance Ammianus Marcellinus 31.9.5), that pederastic initiation rituals were a widespread Indo-European practice, for which Sparta and Crete merely happen to give us our clearest evidence.

Lyric and elegiac poetry

The poetry of the late archaic period provides abundant evidence for pederasty and the high value attached to it at this time. Indeed, there must originally have been much more pederastic poetry. As an example, our sources (e.g. Horace, Ode 1.32.10–12) indicate that Alcaeus was one of the main pederastic poets. Yet nothing remains of his pederastic output but a few minuscule fragments (306 A Fr. 77; 366, 368). Nonetheless, there remain poems or fragments by Solon, Mimnermus, Alcaeus, Ibycus, Theognis (and/or the tradition called the *Theognidea*), Anacreon, Simonides, Pindar, and Bacchylides (as well as poetry by Alcman and Sappho referring to possibly analogous female–female relations).¹⁰ Of these, the most abundant sources are the *Theognidea*, Anacreon, and Pindar.

Book 2 of the *Theognidea* in particular contains a number of seemingly complete pederastic poems (of which a few also appear in Book 1, e.g. 253–4, 993–5). These tend to conflate pederastic relationships with the political–pedagogical man/youth relationship typical of the entire corpus. The poet is simultaneously teacher and *erastēs*, and the values he teaches—in particular loyalty—are *toujours déjà* both political and erotic (see 1271–2, 1311–18; Donlan 1985, 224, Edmunds 1988, 84–5). Even in those poems that strongly emphasize erotic themes, the key vocabulary associated with the

political-pedagogical themes appears (Lear 2011). The *Theognidea* contain the earliest references to many themes that occur throughout the history of the custom: the superiority of boys over women (1365–6), the connection between pederasty and the gymnasium (1335), the time-limitedness of pederastic relationships, which end when the *erōmenos* develops secondary hair (1327).

There are elegies by other authors embedded in the *Theognidea*. These (in particular two attributed elsewhere to the Athenian legislator Solon: 719–28 = Solon 24 and 1253–4 = Solon 23) view pederasty in a different way. They treat the *erōmenos* as a sex object, on a par with luxury goods and women. This is more like the pederasty of Anacreon than like that of the *Theognidea*. Anacreon's (or his poetic persona's) relations with his *erōmenoi* focus on charm, attraction, and seduction/rejection, without any reference to education or politics. Yet his persona does not represent a “bad” or a comic *erastēs*: instead he practices pederasty in conformity with a different set of ideals, which involve withdrawal from the political world and protection of the self against overwhelming passion (Elegy 2 West; see Lear 2008).

Little remains of Pindar's sympotic poetry, but we have one fragment (Fr. 123) of a pederastic poem implying that pederastic desire is common to most men or that those who do not feel it are inferior (or possibly both these things). Pindar also expresses nostalgia for the gentlemanly pederasty of the earlier lyric poets (*Isthmian Odes* 2.1–5). His choral poems in praise of athletic victors also confirm (as does Ibycus 282: see Nicholson 2000) that addressing a youth as the object of pederastic desire and/or comparing him to famous pederastic love objects such as Ganymede (*Olympian Odes* 10.99–106) could function as a mode of public flattery in this period. The story of Poseidon's love for Pelops at Olympian Ode 1.36–88 also indicates that Pindar regarded pederasty with high approval: he claims to tell it in order to put the gods in a better light than does the traditional story of Tantalos and Pelops.

Athenian vase painting

Little remains of Greek wall painting; one of the few intact examples is the Tomb of the Diver, which contains a pederastic courtship scene set at the *sumposion*. By contrast, tens of thousands of painted clay pots have survived better. Athenian pots of the sixth to the fourth centuries in particular provide a great deal of evidence for pederasty. There are approximately 1,000 known pederastic scenes (Lear and Cantarella 2008, xvii), as well as countless painted inscriptions (called *kalos*

inscriptions, from *kalos*, “beautiful”) praising the beauty of boys (see Lissarrague 1999).

Vase painting has played a key role in scholarship on Greek pederasty. Already in 1937 a book was published in English on *kalos* inscriptions (Robinson and Fluck 1937), and in 1947 the great vase scholar John Beazley published a list of black figure scenes, dividing them into three scene types (Beazley 1947, 198–223).

Beazley distinguished two principal types of courtship scene, “up-and-down” and courting-gift scenes. [Figure 7.2](#) is an up-and-down scene. A bearded *erastēs* courts his beardless *erōmenos*. He touches the *erōmenos*' chin (by reaching up) and his genitals (by reaching down). [Figure 7.3](#) is a courting-gift scene: the *erastēs* holds behind him his gift, a hare (the commonest type of gift in such scenes).

Figure 7.2 Amphora by the Phrynos Painter. “Up and down” scene.

Source: Martin-von-Wagner Museum der Universität Würzburg, 241. Photo: Karl Oehrlein.



Figure 7.3 Kylix by Douris. Courting-gift scene.

Source: Martin-von-Wagner Museum der Universität Würzburg, 482. Photo: Karl Oehrlein.



Beazley's third scene type shows a kind of sex that scholars call "intercrural intercourse," in which the *erastēs* inserts his erect penis between the *erōmenos*' thighs. In [Figure 7.4](#), the *erastēs* has bent his knees and placed his head on his upright *erōmenos*' shoulder; we can see the base of his penis as it penetrates the youth's thighs.

Figure 7.4 Lekythos by the Taleides Painter. Scene of intercrural intercourse.

Source: Princeton University Art Museum, y-1986.53.



Up-and-down and intercrural scenes were common only in the sixth century; courting-gift scenes are the most common scene type at all times and were produced until the early fourth century. In the fifth century another pederastic scene type, the scene of Zeus and Ganymede, was common.¹¹ Figure 7.5 is a typical one: Zeus seizes the naked Ganymede as other boys flee in terror. Many pederastic scenes contain a *kalos* inscription. For example, in Figure 7.6a the words *Hippodamas kalos* (“Hippodamas is beautiful”) are inscribed to the left of the couple. There is, however, not necessarily any narrative

connection to the scene, as such inscriptions appear in non-pederastic scenes as well; when they do, they imitate a real-life custom of writing *kalos* graffiti on walls, trees, and so on.¹² There are almost 900 remaining vase inscriptions with a boy's name, as well as countless generic inscriptions reading merely *ho pais kalos* ("the boy is beautiful").

Figure 7.5 Pelike by Hermonax. Zeus seizes Ganymede. Source: Antikenmuseum Basel und Sammlung Ludwig, BS 483. Photo: Claire Niggli.



Figure 7.6a Kylix by Makron. Interior. Note *kalos* inscription along

left-hand rim.

Source: Staatliche Antikensammlungen und Glyptothek München, 2655.



Vase painting is often more explicit about sex than textual sources, and it is tempting to treat it as direct evidence for sexual practices. For example, many scholars have considered intercrural scenes as proof that the Greeks actually practiced intercrural intercourse. Vase painting is, however, not documentary photography, but an artistic genre; through a language of repeated elements, it presents a certain vision or version of practices, just as literary genres do. In general, it presents a highly idealized vision of elite males and their activities. In this light, it is best to ask why vase painters preferred to represent intercrural rather than anal intercourse.¹³ The answer is probably that the former allowed them to portray the *erōmenos* as upright and uninvolved in the sex act: this corresponds to Greek ideals—as does, for instance, the portrayal of men with under-sized genitalia, which symbolize self-restraint—a characteristic further emphasized by the non-erect state of almost all *erōmenoi*'s genitalia, even in scenes where this is clearly unrealistic, as in [Figure 7.2](#).

The main interpretations of vase painting's vision of pederasty have both focused on the association between pederasty and the hunt. Koch-Harnack (1983, 90–7) argued that the elements of hunt iconography (principally gifts of game animals, as in [Figure 7.3](#)) emphasize a view of pederasty as pedagogical: the *erastēs*, a hunter, gives the *erōmenos* game animals, so that he will learn to hunt by chasing them. Schnapp (1997, 255),¹⁴ on the other hand, suggests that the game animal symbolizes the *erōmenos* himself, who is a prey for the *erastēs*.

I have argued elsewhere against both of these views (Lear and Cantarella 2008, 72–89). There are only a few vases that suggest a pedagogical scenario of the type Koch-Harnack envisions. Furthermore, *erastai* in vase painting give *erōmenoi* many different gifts. Some of these (such as lyres) could be considered pedagogical; others (such as flowers) cannot. Vase painting makes no distinction between the categories. In [Figure 7.6b](#), for instance, there are three parallel couples. In each the *erastēs* shows his *erōmenos* a gift, which ranges from a possibly pedagogical hare to a non-pedagogical flower or sprig (in the right-hand couple).

Figure 7.6b Kylix by Makron. Exterior. Parallel courting gift scenes.

Source: Staatliche Antikensammlungen und Glyptothek München, 2655.



The other theory misunderstands the symbolic nature of gifts. The ring that a man gives his wife does not symbolize his view of her or of her role, but rather the relationship he is offering her. Surely the *erastēs*' gifts have a similar purpose, rather than serving to diminish

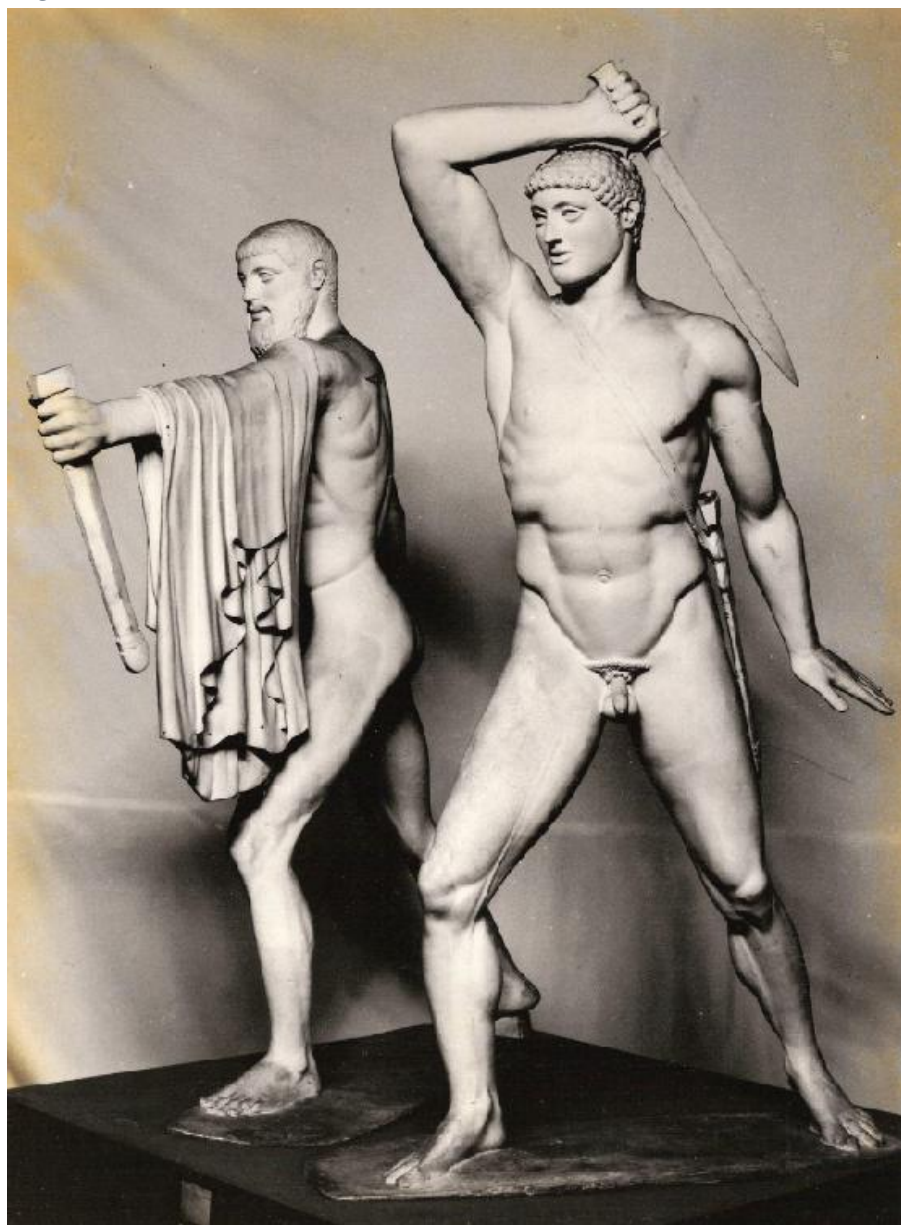
the person whom he is courting. The contrast between mortal courtship scenes and Ganymede scenes, furthermore, emphasizes the fact that mortals do not seize their *erōmenoi*: they might want to seize them, but, lacking Zeus' powers, they need to court them instead.

It is also the case that elements from hunt scenes are no more common in pederastic iconography than elements of athletic scenes. In [Figure 7.2](#), for instance, both figures have oversized thighs and chests that identify them as athletes. They also wear wreaths, which may identify them as athletic victors, in particular the wreath hanging from the *erastēs*' presumably victorious arm. Pederastic scenes almost all contain elements connecting them to athletics, the hunt, or the *sumposion*, and generally more than one of the three. The interpretation of vase painting's vision of pederasty must involve a connection to all three rather than to one alone; along with pederasty, the three form an indissoluble nexus of esteemed elite activities.

Harmodios and Aristogeiton

Harmodios and Aristogeiton were a pederastic couple who assassinated the tyrant Hippias' brother Hipparchos at the Panathenaic festival in 514 bce. As both Herodotus (5.55, 6.123) and Thucydides (1.20, 6.52–60) emphasize, they did not bring an end to the tyranny. Nonetheless, they were regarded by later Athenians as liberators, and, when pederasty was praised, they were almost invariably cited (Pl. *Smp.* 182C, Aeschin. 1.132, Ath. 13.602a). They were the object of adulation—private, civic, and religious. They received cult worship as heroes; their descendants received free meals from the city; and they were praised in song at *sumposia* (see *Carmina popularia* 893–6 PMG). A double statue of them was erected in the agora early in the democracy. When the Persians captured Athens in 480, they took the statues to Susa as booty, but the Athenians responded by erecting a new pair, executed by the sculptors Kritias and Nesiotes, which is known to us from an extant Roman copy ([Figure 7.7](#)).¹⁵ It would be hard to overemphasize the importance of these statues in Athenian life. They stood in the agora, where every voter passed them on his way to the Pnyx, as a model of the quintessential Athenian action: tyrant-slaying. They appeared on Athena's shield on many Panathenaic prize vessels, and Harmodios' slashing gesture influenced the portrayal of Theseus, Athens' founding hero (Taylor 1991, 78–139). For our purposes, what is interesting is that their portrayal emphasizes the pederastic nature of their bond: the mere fact of their unusual double portrayal underlines it, as does their clear division into bearded *erastēs* and beardless *erōmenos* (Stewart 1997 70–5).

Figure 7.7 Plaster reconstruction of the Tyrrannicides. Statue-group by Kritios and Nesiotes. Rome, Museo dei Gessi. Photo: DAI-Rome (neg. no. 84.331).



The Athenian theater

The evidence for pederasty in the archaic period is from and/or about a variety of places in the Greek world. We have more evidence for the classical period; nonetheless, except for a few references to Sparta's

educational system or the Theban Sacred Band (the mid-fourth-century crack regiment that was stationed in *erastēs/erōmenos* order and famously died to a man, fighting Phillip of Macedon at Chaeronea),¹⁶ these are almost exclusively from or about Athens. Though rich and powerful, Athens was not necessarily typical of ancient Greek culture, in which each city had its own customs, cults, and so on. Thus these sources, discussed in the next three sections, represent an extraordinarily strong set of evidence—but one with significant limitations.

The record of classical Athenian culture is also of course incomplete. There were for instance tragedies on pederastic themes, but we have only very slight fragments from them. Two fragments of the *Myrmidons* (Frr. 135 and 136 Radt) make clear that Aeschylus portrayed Achilles and Patroklos as a pederastic couple. Even less remains from Sophocles. There are a few references in Euripides' extant plays (see Poole 1990); in particular, the fragments of the *Chrysippus* present Laios' rape of Chrysippos as the origin of pederasty (see Hubbard 2006). The argument has been made that the shift from the *Myrmidons* to the *Chrysippus* demonstrates a drop in pederasty's social esteem. This is plausible, although erotic passion is often destructive in Euripides regardless of the lovers' gender.

Comedy presents more evidence:¹⁷ if we consider Aristophanes' extant nine complete comedies, pederasty is an important theme in the *Knights* (*Equites*) and in the *agōn* of the *Clouds* (*Nubes*) (889–1104) and puts in minor appearances elsewhere.¹⁸ Aristophanes portrays the custom in a coarser, less idealistic way than archaic sources do, although it is hard to say whether this is due to a change in society or to a difference in genre. At *Peace* (*Pax*) 724 it is clear that Zeus' sexual relations with Ganymede are anal; *erōmenoi* are called venal at *Wealth* (*Ploutos*) 149–59; and the *erastai* portrayed at *Wasps* (*Vespes*) 1025–8 are concerned only with their own ego gratification and not with the reputations/futures of their *erōmenoi*. At *Clouds* (*Nubes*) 973–83 the character Better Argument's rhetoric of pedagogical pederasty is portrayed as hypocritical.

Yet pederastic desire is nonetheless characteristic of Aristophanes' comic heroes, as for instance of the old democrat Philokleon in the *Wasps* (578) and of Peisetairos in the *Birds* (*Aves*) (137–42). Finally, it is characteristic of Demos himself (a character whose name makes him a personification of the “People”). When Demos (portrayed as an old man) is restored to his youth at the end of the *Knights*, he is given “a well-hung boy,” for him to use “as a folding-stool” (1384–7). Pederasty is also associated with the past—always the better time in Aristophanes. Demos responds to the gift of the boy by saying: “Happy me! I'm getting back to the good old days!” And, while Better

Argument's pederastic desires are the subject of mockery, his opponent's new education is the ultimate subject of the play's attack.

The mockery of pederasty in Aristophanes' comedies is, furthermore, relatively mild by comparison with the vitriol employed there against the new-fangled politicians, thinkers, and poets—people such as Kleon, Socrates, and Agathon—who are the comedies' principal targets. Hubbard (1998, 53) suggests that Aristophanes views pederasty as a kind of formative training for these adult degenerates. Yet such a connection is never made explicit in the extant comedies. Instead, when in the *Knights* we hear about the youth of a degenerate, the Sausage-Seller, he was not an elite *erōmenos*, but rather a lower-class prostitute (1242). In short, Aristophanes mocks elite pederasty, but without the intense bitterness he deploys on other topics.

Socrates and his followers

We know Socrates' ideas only through the writings of his followers, principally the philosopher Plato and the general and historian Xenophon. Pederasty is an important theme in Socratic discourse, but the two authors' accounts of Socrates' views differ sharply: Xenophon's "Socrates" condemns consummated pederasty without qualification (*Smp.* 8.32–3, *Mem.* 1.2.29–30), while Plato (at least in his middle works) treats pederasty as superior to the love of women (Pl. *Smp.* 208E–9E), and even consummated pederasty as a second-best option, below only philosophical love (Pl. *Phdr.* 256A–D).

It is furthermore uncertain whether the authors are using "Socrates" (as they so often do) as a spokesman for their own viewpoints. On this point, their work suggests some distance between their own views and those of "Socrates." There is a marked disjunction between the views attributed to Socrates in works of Plato's middle period such as the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*, where Socrates remains the main character (as he is in the early dialogues), and the views attributed to the main character in Plato's last work, the *Laws*: there, at 835E–42E, the Athenian says that he would ban from the ideal city all sex except procreative sex within marriage. Xenophon, on the other hand, represents Socrates' views as more akin to those of the Athenian in Plato's *Laws*, yet he portrays himself (or his past self) as interested in kissing beautiful boys (*Mem.* 1.3.11); furthermore, in his historical works, where Socrates does not appear, Xenophon generally treats pederasty more sympathetically (e.g. Xen. *Cyn.* 12.20 and *An.* 7.4.7–11; see Hindley 1994).

Thus it is probably impossible to ascribe a consistent view of

pederasty to Socrates, Plato, or Xenophon on the basis of the evidence we have. There is, however, a common ground between the authors' conflicting accounts, and perhaps we may at least regard this as plausibly historical. Pederastic attractions and courtship are part and parcel of the elite Athenian settings in which both authors show Socrates discoursing: we see a discussion of the relative attractions of boys at the gym (Pl. *Chrm.* 153D–4B), songs sung in praise of a boy (Pl. *Ly.* 204D), a youth joking about the many propositions he has received from his fellow symposiasts (Xen. *Smp.* 4.10). Although the two authors differ on the degree of Socrates' criticism, both portray him as participating in the ambient pederastic discourse for ironic, pedagogical purposes. Plato's Socrates often portrays himself as erotically attracted to a boy (see e.g. *Chrm.* 155D, *Smp.* 216D–19C) only to use his supposed attraction to engage the boy in philosophical discussion; Xenophon's Socrates also plays at pederasty (*Smp.* 8.3–6). Pederasty is also a topic of debate in this world more generally: this is particularly so in Plato's *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, where several different perspectives on the custom are given, from the idealizing to the critical, but a multi-sided discussion is also implicit in Xenophon's *Symposium* (see particularly 8.32–4).

In Plato's *Symposium*, for instance, Phaidros' opening speech (178A–80B) takes an unquestioningly idealistic/idealizing view of pederasty as leading to heroic courage in both the *erastēs* and the *erōmenos* — in other words, as ethically educative. In the next speech, however, Pausanias casts doubts over the reasons for the idealization of the custom by dividing pederasty into a heavenly type, which revolves around the love of the soul, and a vulgar type, characteristic of men who are concerned with the body rather than the soul and (consequently) desire women as well as boys (180C–5C). Plato's Lysias (*Phdr.* 230E–4C) and Xenophon's Socrates take these criticisms further. Indeed, one could even see Plato's Socrates' famous ladder of love in Diotima's speech (*Smp.* 201D–12C) as a contribution to this debate, as it proposes a pederasty purified of personal desire.

Thus both authors portray the Athenian intellectual elite as idealizing pederasty but questioning this idealization. For this reason, despite the many glowing words about pederasty that they contain, the Socratics' writings are among the principal texts (along with the pseudo-Demosthenic *Eroticus*) that led to Dover's and Foucault's understanding of pederasty as a subject of ethical debate in ancient Greece—what Foucault (1985, 191–2) called its “problematization.”

Court cases

Aside from comedy and philosophy, we also have evidence for classical Athenian views of pederasty from courtroom speeches. These were preserved as examples of rhetorical style, so we often lack historical information about the cases themselves; nonetheless they were at least intended to persuade a jury, and therefore they must at least represent an attempt at mirroring (or manipulating) public opinion.

There are references to pederasty in a number of extant speeches (e.g. Isaeus 10.25, Aeschin. 3.162). Two in particular focus largely on pederastic relations: Lysias 3 (*Against Simon*),¹⁹ and Aeschines 1 (*Against Timarchos*). Lysias 3 is a case about a violent struggle over a youth loved by both the prosecutor and the defendant; it is spoken by the unnamed defendant, who has been accused of assault. The youth's status (slave or free person) is uncertain; both litigants claim to have had a contractual erotic relationship with him. Our lack of contextual knowledge makes the speech's veracity impossible to assess, but the defendant's assumptions give us interesting information about social attitudes: for instance, he treats fights over a youth of this type as analogous to fights over a *hetaira* (female courtesan) (43); and he treats being in love, including love of the pederastic variety, as a positive characteristic (44). On the other hand, he stresses that he is/was ashamed of being involved in this kind of struggle—and of being in love at an advanced age (whatever that may be).

We are better informed about Aeschines 1. In this speech, Aeschines accuses a man named Timarchos of having been a prostitute in his youth; under Athenian law, he would, if convicted, be deprived of the right to speak in the Assembly, in other words to participate in the government of the polis. The arguments presented by Aeschines are, to a modern mind, obvious attempts at manipulating the jury's prejudices with little evidentiary basis. We know, however, from Demosthenes that they were successful (Dem. 19.257 and 284), so they must have reflected audience prejudice somewhat accurately. Aeschines says (1.132) that the defense will argue that Timarchos was not a prostitute but a respectable *erōmenos*. In his rebuttal of this argument, he distinguishes between Timarchos' behavior and that of an *erōmenos*, constructing as he does so a kind of ethical system for pederastic relations, divided (as it is in Pausanias' speech in Plato's *Symposium*) into a good option (which he terms at 1.136 *dikaïos erōs* "legitimate love") and a bad option (prostitution). As a result, Dover made this speech the centerpiece of his *Greek Homosexuality*, and it has remained a key text for all studies in this area since that time.

Aeschines 1 makes a number of aspects of the ancient Greek sexual imaginary clear. It is for instance clear that, while anal intercourse was not illegal, it was viewed negatively enough—and closely enough

associated with prostitution—for the accusation (even if not explicit) of participating in it to be damaging if it was believed; the penetrated partner was considered effeminate (111, 131), as in Aristophanes. It is also clear that Timarchos (or even the bogeyman made out of him) was not a homosexual in the modern sense: at 107, for instance, Aeschines says that, when he was an official in the colony of Andros, he was renowned for his relations with citizen wives.²⁰ At times, one might even think that his sexual relations were purely mercenary: thus at 75 Aeschines says that he used the money he earned as a prostitute to keep “flute-girls and the most expensive courtesans.” Yet this does not seem to be the point. Instead part of what is so disgraceful about Timarchos is that he not only was penetrated anally but desired it: at 41, for instance, Aeschines refers to “the acts that Misgolas was eager to perform, and Timarchos to have done to him.” The thing that unites Timarchos’ various disgraceful activities is his lack of self-control: he was (42) “a *slave* to the most disgraceful pleasures” (my emphasis), and these include not only female prostitutes, but gluttony and dice.

The division between all this and “legitimate eros” is also clear. Aeschines needs to establish it in order to defend himself against the defense’s strategy of calling his prosecution an offense against the tradition of idealizing pederasty (132). The defense will also, he says, bring into evidence his own pederastic activities and the pederastic poetry that he has written. It will claim that he is a bad *erastēs*, and he must reclaim the pederastic high ground. To this end, he discusses Achilles and Patroklos’ relationship at some length (141–50) and (in a move that seems surprising to a modern reader) lists respectable Athenian *erōmenoi*, past and present (155–7), to contrast them—or their reputations—with Timarchos.²¹

Thus the high status of pederasty in Athenian culture is confirmed. Yet the case also makes clear how risky an activity pederasty was for the all-important reputation of the participants. A relationship that seemed respectable to some people might be regarded as disreputable—or even as prostitution—by others, and the penalties for engaging in pederasty in a way that was deemed disreputable by many could be enormous. How true this was in earlier periods or in cities other than Athens is uncertain, but this text and its historical context confirm that pederasty was highly “problematized” in classical Athens.

Hellenistic and imperial sources

Little attention is paid in scholarship on this topic to Hellenistic and imperial sources of evidence. These are substantial, but we often lack contextual information; indeed in a number of cases we do not know

where the authors were from, or even what century they lived in. Many, furthermore, reuse archaic or classical material (or both) in ways that make it hard for us to assess their relationship to their own social reality.

Poetry is an important source for the Hellenistic period. Pederasty is an important theme in two of the three most important Hellenistic poets, Callimachus and Theocritus. It remains important in Hellenistic epigram; Book 12 of the *Palatine Anthology* consists of pederastic poetry, and much of it is Hellenistic. There are changes in the views on or versions of pederasty presented in the poetry of this period. Theocritus, for instance, seems to take erotic reciprocity between *erastēs* and *erōmenos* for granted (12.10, 15, 29.32), while in archaic and classical sources only the *erastēs* is depicted as feeling erotic desire (see for example Pl. *Phdr.* 255A). Many themes from earlier pederastic poetry persist, however: for instance, *AP* 12.30–3 and 39–40 concerns boys whose attractions vanish with the appearance of body hair.

Many philosophers of the Hellenistic period wrote books on *erōs*, and we have references (principally in Diogenes Laertius and Athenaeus)²² to their pederastic views and practices. For instance, Stoics are said to have kept their *erōmenoi* until the age of 28 (Ath. 13.563E). Another interesting source is the third-century bce gymnastic law of the Thracian city of Beroea (*SEG* 27.261, Side B, 13–15), in which young men are forbidden to talk with the boys in the gymnasium, presumably to prevent seduction.

Finally, it seems important to mention that Alexander the Great, although non-Greek, had some relationship with pederasty. Stories about his father Phillip's court (Diod. Sic. 16.93–4) indicate that some kind of man–youth sexual relations were practiced there—although without Athenian idealization. Alexander is said to have had an erotic relationship with his coeval Hephaestion, which he took pains to connect to the legend of Achilles and Patroklos (Ael. *VH* 7.8, 12.7).

Pederasty appears in the work of many Greek authors of the imperial and late antique periods: in Plutarch, Strato the epigrammatist, the Greek novelists, Athenaeus, Philostratus, and Lucian, among others.²³ As in Hellenistic sources in general, there is considerable continuity from earlier periods: in Lucian, for instance, as in Plato, pederasty is declared to be superior (*Am.* 50), as it is the kind of love appropriate to the wise.²⁴ Love for women and married love has, however, risen in status. In fact three imperial works (Plu. *Amat.* 750A–2B, Ach. Tat. 2.35–8, Luc. *Am.* 19–51) stage debates between enthusiasts of the two kinds of love, and in Plutarch's *Eroticus* (also known as *Amatorius*) heterosexual marital love seems to win the day, both in the discussion and in the surrounding plot. Strato's epigrams,

furthermore, perhaps under the influence of Roman poetry, sexual practices, or both, present a very different pederasty from that of the archaic and classical poets: Strato writes of anal sex (never intercrural) (*AP* 12.240, 243, 245), of sex with slave boys (12.211) or prostitutes (12.237, 239), or even of sex with youths with secondary hair (12.10, 178).

Rome

Sex with adolescent males was among the socially approved sexual options for a Roman man.²⁵ On the whole, however, a Roman man's sexual relations with adolescent males were restricted to slaves and prostitutes. Sex with a free-born Roman youth, like sex with a freeborn Roman woman other than one's wife, would have constituted the crime of *stuprum*—a broad category of forbidden sexual behavior (Williams 2010, 103–36). As a result, pederastic relations of the kind idealized by the Greeks, involving a mentoring relationship between males of similar social levels, had no place in Roman sexual–social ethics.

A few Roman authors comment on the Greek practice of pederasty; these hover between disapprobation and a neutral recognition of pederasty as a foreign custom. Ennius was presumably referring to pederasty when he said that “nudity among citizens is the beginning of shamefulness” (Fr. 407), and Cicero quotes him at *Tusculan Disputations* 4.70; Nepos (Praef. 4) also accuses Greek youths of promiscuity in their role as *erōmenoi* and points out in the preface to his collection of biographies that the Greek customs he describes would be considered disgraceful in Rome (Praef. 5). Both authors, however, also comment on pederasty in a seemingly neutral way. Nepos (*Alc.* 2.2) says of Alcibiades simply that, “at the beginning of his adolescence, he was loved by many men, according to the Greek custom [*more Graecorum*],” and Cicero (*Tusc.* 4.70) says, without editorial comment, that “this practice seems to me to have originated in the Greeks' gymnasia, where such love affairs are freely permitted.”

Erotic relations following the conventions of Greek pederasty also make several surprising appearances in Roman poetry. Several of the bucolic figures in Virgil's *Eclogues* are in love with youths. Although these figures are shepherds or goatherds and therefore not the kind of elite urban citizens with whom Greek pederasty is generally associated, their homoerotic relationships take place between males of similar social status and involve pedagogical elements. For instance, Menalcas at *Eclogue* 3.74–5 helps Amyntas with his hunting (and gives him courting-gifts at *Ecl.* 3.70–1). Virgil expresses no disapprobation

of these relationships; indeed he makes no sharp distinction between his bucolics' pederastic loves and heterosexual ones, which they also express (*Ecl.* 3.66–7, 78–9).

Pederasty plays a role in the *Aeneid* as well. Aeneas' relationship with the youth Pallas is not explicitly erotic, but Virgil emphasizes parallels between it and the hero's relationship with Dido (Putnam 1995: 33–41). There is also an explicitly pederastic couple on the Trojan side, Nisus and Euryalus. Virgil leaves this pair's showy heroism open to criticism: they demonstrate courage by volunteering for a dangerous and important mission but fail to accomplish it because they waste their time on a bloodthirsty rampage of plundering (9.176–445). Nonetheless their death embodies the tradition of pederastic heroism: Nisus, the *erastēs*, expires on the breast of his *erōmenos*, having sacrificed his life to protect and avenge him (9.438–45). Virgil makes much of this moment, apostrophizing the couple as a “fortunate pair” (*fortunati ambo*) and dedicating his art to maintaining their eternal fame (9.446–9).

It is not clear what if any connection Virgil intends between these characters' sexual lives and those of contemporary Romans. The bucolic figures in the *Eclogues* live at a mythical remove from reality, and the *Aeneid* concerns myth, or at least the distant past; the characters are also as connected to their Greek literary models as to any Italian reality. Yet, as some of the *Eclogues* make clear, these bucolics live in Italy—and the *Aeneid*'s Trojans are important ancestors of the Roman people.

Catullus and Tibullus, on the other hand, portray themselves (or their poetic personae) as loving and courting Roman youths of elite status in the context of contemporary late republican/early imperial Rome. Catullus gives his boy-love a seemingly elite name, Iuventus (Catullus 24, 48, 81, 99), and portrays him as free to choose among his suitors; Tibullus in 1.4 receives advice from the god Priapus about courting boys who engage in such paradigmatically elite activities as riding (1.4.11) and hunting (1.4.49–50).²⁶ It is not surprising for Catullus' persona to violate Roman sexual ethics: one of the other main topics of his poetry is his love for Lesbia, a married Roman woman (Catullus 83.1). There is, however, no similar excuse for Tibullus. Greek pederasty clearly had some power over the imagination of Roman poets, if not over their and their contemporaries' personal habits as well.

Questions of Interpretation

Given the complicated evidentiary record, it is unsurprising that there is much scholarly debate about Greek pederasty. This is also undoubtedly the case because it is unclear to what extent one can map the modern concept of “homosexuality” onto Greek pederasty. The debate between those who believe that one can (generally called “essentialists”) and those who believe one cannot (generally called “social constructionists”) is covered in Chapters 1 and 3. In what follows I will consider, more simply, some questions about the parameters of Greek pederasty as our sources of evidence portray it. As stated above, these parameters are: when the custom originated; when it ended (as an approved custom); where pederasty was practiced; who was supposed to participate in it, in terms of class and age; what elements, erotic and non-erotic, their relations were supposed to include; and the limits of social approval.

There are, as I stated earlier, a number of different theories about the origins of Greek pederasty. Some argue that it is a custom inherited from the Greeks' Indo-European ancestors.²⁷ The evidence for this view, however, is poor: its adherents adduce parallels from a few Germanic tribes, but, to establish an Indo-European provenance, it would be necessary to show that pederasty was practiced far more widely among Indo-European peoples. The associated, but more widely held theory that pederasty derives from initiation rites involving pederastic sex is more plausible, in that there are a few pieces of evidence for initiation rites or analogous practices involving pederasty in the Greek world. Some scholars (in particular Sergent 1986b) adduce as evidence for this theory myths that have the structure of initiation rites and contain pederastic elements. Myth, however, is mutable and is not probative in this regard: it is possible that the pederastic elements were added into the myths in historic times. Furthermore, evidence such as the Kato Syme statuettes (Figure 7.1), although it may suggest the existence of an initiation rite involving pederasty, does not prove that pederasty derived from initiation rites; here too pederasty could have arisen separately and been added to preexisting rites (as seems likely to have occurred in Melanesia).²⁸

It is, however, equally untrue that the absence of explicit references to pederasty in the Homeric epics proves that pederasty was neither practiced nor valued in Greece of the eighth century or earlier. On the whole, it is most prudent to accept that we do not know when pederasty originated as a social practice. The Kato Syme statuettes imply that it was practiced, at least on Crete, as early as the eighth or seventh centuries bce, but there is no solid evidence for or against it being practiced earlier.

The date at which the custom vanished as a custom is a little easier

to establish, although the causes are a matter of dispute. Several scholars have argued that late antique sexual morality was similar to Christian morality and that thus the changes in sexual practice in late antiquity must be ascribed to a more general trend in sexual morality rather than to Christianity. The evidence for this generally comes from philosophical texts and medical writings that follow the line established in Plato's *Laws*.²⁹ There are, however, large differences between ancient pagan ascetic ideas and the Christian view of sex as sinful (see Foucault 1986, 237–40 and Gaca 2003). Moreover, it is difficult to know how influential such theoretical writing was in people's private lives, and the texts mentioned in my discussion of the imperial period testify that pederasty, if less dominant than in the archaic or classical periods, still occupied an important place in the sexual imaginary of the Greek world in the third century ce. On the other hand, a series of imperial edicts imposed ever more severe limitations on male–male love, starting with (repeated) laws banning male prostitution and ending with laws banning all male–male sex.³⁰ Cantarella (1992, 186) makes the convincing argument that these represent a serial attempt to impose Christian sexual morality ever more completely. The culmination of this trend, for our purposes, was reached in 528/9, when under Justinian's explicitly Christian laws two bishops were punished by being deposed, castrated, and paraded through Constantinople for being pederasts (Theophanes, *Chronographia, anno mundi* 6021). This is the first time when pederasty is treated as a crime in our sources of evidence. It thus represents, for lack of further evidence, at least a symbolic end to the period in which pederasty was an allowed and generally esteemed practice and the beginning of a period in which it was seen as part of a broader category of male–male sex that was judged criminal on religious grounds.

Where pederasty was practiced is an even simpler question. There is evidence for pederasty from an astonishing range of Greek places and times, from eighth-century bce Crete to fifth-century bce Paestum to third-century bce Alexandria to second-century ce Boeotia, and so on. The Greeks seem to have believed that pederasty was practiced differently in different places; it was also thought to have begun in different places at different times. On the whole, however, for every place and time in ancient Greek history for which we have evidence about sexual practices, there is evidence for the practice of pederasty. Thus it seems best to assume that it was practiced throughout the Greek world throughout its history (with the possible exception of some undefined early period).

Our evidence for the next two questions—who was supposed to participate in pederastic relations and what these relations were

supposed to consist of—is abundant, although mainly from and for classical Athens. However, it must be stressed that our knowledge here is of what was *supposed* to be done. Our sources give us an idealized image of pederastic relations. Authors such as Plato and Aeschines also give us at times the reverse of the coin, that is, an image of non-ideal pederasty or non-pederastic male–male sexual relations. In comedy we also see the pederastic ideal through a mocking eye. No text, however, tries to give us a detailed account of an actual relationship, or the life of an actual *erastēs* or *erōmenos*. We have evidence for ideals and for the cultural “opposites” of ideals. These may at times hint at realities, but that is the most we can hope for.

Many portrayals of pederastic relations place them in the world of the social elite, in the gymnasium, at the *sumposion*, and at the hunt. Red figure vase painting emphasizes the leisureliness of pederastic courtship by portraying the *erastēs* generally leaning on his walking-stick (see [Figures 7.3](#) and [7.6a](#)); Plato's Pausanias' censure of boys who do not take their time choosing whether to accept an *erastēs* (Pl. *Smp.* 184A) would also seem to favor *erastai* who had abundant time for courtship. No source however tells us that middling or poorer Athenians did not also practice pederasty.³¹ Indeed Thucydides (6.54) tells us that Aristogeiton was a *mesos politēs* (middling citizen), and Xenophon's Isomachos, at *Oeconomicus* 12.14–15, says that one should not choose as a farm bailiff a man who is excessively in love with his *erōmenos*. The Greek prejudice against paid work suggests that most farm bailiffs were of lower class origin. It also seems (Shapiro 2000, Lear and Cantarella 2008, 168–70) that, in the late archaic period, certain vase painters—paradigmatically lower class men (Pl. *R.* 420D–1A)—participated, if perhaps jokingly, in the cult of the youths whose *kalos* inscriptions they painted. Thus, while pederasty is identified with the elite, it is uncertain that it was restricted to it; our lack of evidence for non-elite lives makes certainty on this point difficult to achieve.

About age, our sources are even less precise than about social class. It has often been stated that *erastai* were generally young men, and some scholars seem to believe that Greek men gave pederasty up when they married. Yet there is little evidence for these propositions. Mature men frequently appear as *erastai* in Greek stories without a whiff of censure. When Socrates for instance—a mature, married man returning from battle—visits the gymnasium at the beginning of the *Charmides*, it is assumed that he will find the same boys or youths attractive as the young men do; and he does (Pl. *Chrm.* 153D–5D). Similarly Ion of Chios reports as an example of Sophocles' cleverness his method of stealing a kiss from a serving boy while acting as

general on campaign (Ath. 13.603e–4d).

As for the age of *erōmenoi*, the only two sources of evidence that explicitly mention their ages place them between the threshold of puberty and advanced adolescence: Plutarch (*Lyc.* 17) says that in Sparta boys began to have *erastai* at the age of 12,³² and the poet Strato (*AP* 12.4) praises boys as ever more attractive from 12 to 17—but puts 18-year-olds off limits, as mature men. These sources are late, but it is unlikely that they represent a wholesale change from earlier periods, particularly as many earlier sources imply analogous practices and views. Davidson (2007, 68–98) argues that it was proper to love boys only after they turned 18, but the sources imply the opposite: that 18 was a notional upper limit (no matter how porous this limit may have been in actuality).³³ Many sources portray precisely the boys that Davidson claims were off-limits—those in the age-class of *paides*, under 18—as the principal objects of attraction. This is true of Lysis in Plato's *Lysis*, who is classed as a *pais*; the objects of Better Argument's attraction are schoolboys, and therefore certainly *paides*. Davidson (2007, 80) cites Pausanias in Plato's *Symposium* (181C–2A), who says that there ought to be a law against loving boys before there is down on their chins. Yet by claiming that there ought to be a law, Pausanias makes clear that there was none; indeed the implication is that what he objects to is common practice. He is, furthermore, the lover of an adult *erōmenos*, the playwright Agathon, and his views on this point seem intended in part as special pleading for his own unusual love life. Upsetting as it may be for modern sensibilities, Greek *erōmenoi* seem to have been of the age of modern highschoolers; if Davidson (2007, 80–1) is right in claiming that Greek boys matured physically later than modern boys, they may often have been pre-pubescent, as indeed many vase paintings suggest.³⁴

Recent scholarship (as Davidson rightly complains, 2007, 101–21) has been obsessed with figuring out what pederastic couples did in bed. This is undoubtedly in part a reaction to the reticence of our sources. These are both euphemistic (referring only to the *erōmenos* “gratifying” the *erastēs*) and stingy with information. Plato's *Phaedrus*, while highly metaphorical, provides one of the most explicit descriptions of pederastic love-making when it refers to the lovers “grasping, kissing, and lying down with” each other (255B–C). Yet even this, of course, does not refer explicitly to any form of genital contact. Even Aristophanes, so free with his jibes about anal intercourse between adult men, refers to it only once in a specifically pederastic context, in an oblique joke about Zeus and Ganymede (*Pax* 724). Vase painting is more explicit. Up-and-down scenes show *erastai* fondling their *erōmenoi*'s genitals (though without causing excitement); this is also mentioned as a desideratum in Aristophanes

(Av. 137–42). There are also scenes in vase painting of intercrural intercourse, and these allow us to understand the references to boys' thighs in Greek poetry (Solon 25, Anacreon 407, Aeschylus Fr. Radt 136) as indirect references to a form of intercourse. Finally, there are two pederastic vase paintings showing anal intercourse, as well as a few scenes in which an *erastēs*' interest in an *erōmenos*' buttocks is portrayed more indirectly (Lear and Cantarella 2008, 115–19).

What does this tell us about actual sex? It does seem that pederastic relations were consummated, at least at times; but it is uncertain how. Intercrural intercourse seems to have been practiced and regarded as acceptable; anal intercourse seems likely also to have been practiced but to have been regarded as unmentionable, except for comic purposes. *Erōmenoi* were not thought of as being sexually excited, and therefore their modes of achieving orgasm are unrecorded. This may in part reflect the early age of many *erōmenoi*; since, however, *erōmenoi* were apparently not always presexual, some of this attitude is clearly due to a conventional reticence.

Before passing on to the non-sexual side of pederastic relationships, it seems necessary to devote a few words to the common theory that the Greeks placed great emphasis, in their view of sexual activity, on the division between active penetrators and passive objects of penetration.³⁵ Davidson (1997, 167–82) and Hubbard (1998, 55–9) have each provided a long-needed rebuttal of this view. With respect to pederasty, the Greeks did not regard penetrative sex positively in relation to either participant; there is no text in which a man who has penetrated a boy is portrayed positively. Boys were certainly not supposed to allow (or be known to allow) themselves to be penetrated, but the possibility is not often raised. In those sources that criticize boys for poor behavior as *erōmenoi*, the emphasis is instead on “gratifying” their lovers too easily and for venal reasons (see for example Pl. *Smp.* 184A–B, Xen. *Smp.* 8.21). Aeschines 1 does imply that Timarchos allowed himself to be penetrated, but it does so in the framework of a charge of prostitution, and certainly Aeschines does not hold up Timarchos' lovers for praise.

After several paragraphs about the sexual side of pederastic relationships, it is important to place the strongest emphasis on the fact that sex occupies only a small portion of Greek discourse about pederasty. Desire and courtship are the commonest theme(s) in both literary and visual representations. Pederasty's connections with other valorized activities and attitudes (athletics, hunting, the *sumposion*; self-restraint, bravery) are constantly emphasized. Its supposed role in educating boys, that is, in training them in these activities and attitudes and more simply in fostering the *erōmenos*' interests, is also a key theme. We see this in practice in the *Theognidea*; we hear it

praised in Phaidros', Pausanias', and Socrates'/Diotima's speeches in Plato's *Symposium* (178A–80B, 180C–5C, 201D–12C); we hear it attacked in Lysias' speech in Plato's *Phaedrus* (230E–34C) and mocked in the *agōn* of Aristophanes' *Clouds* (889–1104). Thus, if we do not get explicit information about sexual practices from our sources for Greek pederasty, it is not only because they are reticent about sex, but because their emphasis lies elsewhere, on other aspects and associations of the custom.

Finally, it should be clear from the foregoing that different sources represent pederasty very differently. There is a long tradition, from the *Theognidea* to Lucian, of texts that represent the custom in a highly idealistic or idealizing way. Other sources, such as Aristophanes' comedies and the first two speeches in Plato's *Phaedrus* (230E–4C, 237A–41D), cast doubt on this idealizing view; others, such as the third speech in the *Phaedrus* (243E–57B), attempt to reformulate the custom, generally by suggesting that it would be better without consummation. This kind of debate is also reflected in the organization of Plato's *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, where multiple perspectives on pederasty are offered within each work. Moreover, some of these perspectives, in and of themselves, reify the complexity of social views of this custom: Pausanias in the *Symposium* (183D) emblematically portrays the custom not as good or bad, but as complex, good when practiced correctly and bad when practiced incorrectly. Aeschines 1, finally, suggests that this complex view was widely shared and also that the lines between good and bad pederasty were uncertain: one person's good pederasty could be another person's bad.

It is this complex ethical debate that led Foucault to the view that pederasty was “problematized” in Greek culture. His view is undoubtedly correct as regards classical Athens. Such scholars as Shapiro (1981 and 2000, 21) and Hubbard (1998 and 2000b, 7–11) have, however, argued that attitudes toward pederasty shift toward the negative under the democracy in Athens. This would, of course, imply that they were more uniformly positive in earlier times. In my own work I continue this trend by arguing that the “problematization” of pederasty in classical Athens represents, like so much else in the period of authors like Aristophanes and Plato, a reversal of the values of archaic Greece. Hubbard has argued that the increasing problematization in fifth-century Athens derives from popular hostility to the custom: as the *dēmos* became more powerful, pederasty, as an aristocratic custom, lost prestige. As an alternative (or additional) explanation, I suggest that the increasing professionalization of education (for the elite) brought in by the Sophists in the late fifth century weakened the association between pederasty and pedagogy

and thus undercut the idealization of the custom.³⁶

In any case, it must be remembered that “problematization” is not condemnation. In general, views of pederasty range from the positive to the ambiguous; wholly negative views (as perhaps in Plato's *Laws*) are very rare. Finally, one should bear in mind that, as far as we know, pederasty continued as an esteemed practice in the Greek world for another seven centuries after Aristophanes and Plato.

Guide to Further Reading

Although Greek pederasty was already a subject of study for German scholars in the eighteenth century, English-language scholarship largely avoided the topic until the late 1970s. This changed with the appearance of Kenneth Dover's *Greek Homosexuality* in 1978 (Dover 1989) and, shortly thereafter, of Foucault 1985, which presents a closely related though more theoretical view. Though these authors have come under attack in recent years, their work remains fundamental: among their other merits, Dover was the first to suggest that the study of the sexual customs of this distant culture could be done without subjecting them to moral judgment in modern western terms. Dover and Foucault are jointly responsible for current scholarship's focus on the Greeks' complex ethical system regarding sex, and the homoerotic in particular. Foucault summed this complexity up by terming Greek pederasty “problematized.” For a time a kind of Dover–Foucauldian orthodoxy dominated studies of pederasty, being sustained by such works as Halperin (1990), which focuses on the importance of sex roles (active versus passive) in Greek sexual ethics. There have always been, however, critical voices: David Cohen (1991) argues, for instance, that Dover and Foucault overstated the degree of consensus in Athenian society, while authors such as Bernard Sergent (1986a, 1986b) focus on the idea that Greek pederasty originated in tribal initiation rites. If this were the custom's point of origin, this would tend to lend more credence to the ancient Greeks' claims about its pedagogical role than Halperin and others concede. Criticism has intensified in recent years. James Davidson 1997 (and less cogently 2007) and Hubbard 1998 argue that Dover, Foucault, and Halperin overstate the importance of anal penetration in Greek categorizations of sex and desire; Davidson also argues that these authors overstate the importance of sex in the custom more generally. Lear and Cantarella 2008 argue that the visual evidence has received inadequate attention and has been interpreted in an unsophisticated manner; in the current article I argue that Dover and

Foucault's theories account better for classical Athenian evidence than for earlier or non-Athenian evidence. Dover 1989 still provides the best general overview of this topic in English, however; nonetheless it is best to read his work in conjunction with Hubbard 2003, a sourcebook presenting a diverse group of sources, from the beginning of antiquity to the end. Cantarella 1992 was the first to make a clear distinction between Greek and Roman sexual ethics (which much earlier work confused). Williams 2010 presents a broad account of Roman homosexual practices and shows them to be very different from Greek customs.

Notes

- 1 See Chapter 8.
- 2 See Dover 1988, 130 and Patzer 1982, 94–8, for once in agreement.
- 3 See for instance Ogden 1996.
- 4 This idea, which relies on ethnographic parallels with tribes in Melanesia, was first voiced by Bethe in 1907. See also Jeanmaire 1939, Brelich 1969, Bremmer 1980, Patzer 1982, and Sergent 1986a and 1986b; and, for counter-arguments, Dover 1988 and Percy 1996, 17.
- 5 See Sergent 1986a and Dover 1988, 126–8 for a skeptical response.
- 6 This myth appears already at *Iliad* 20.232–5 and thereafter remains an important motif throughout classical literature and art (see for instance *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* 202–6, Theognis 1345–50). See below on Ganymede in vase painting.
- 7 See Patzer 1982, 85–7 and Cantarella 1992, 7 for the initiatory interpretation and Dover 1988, 126 and 1989, 123 for the obscene.
- 8 See n. 4, and Dodd 2000 for further questions about Ephoros' reliability and the relationship of this ritual to initiation.
- 9 See for instance Percy 1996, 59–71.
- 10 See Solon 23, 24, and 25; Mimnermus 1.9; Alcaeus 306A Fr. 77; 366, 388; Ibycus 282.41–6; 282A Frr. 8.7 and 16.10; 282C Fr. 27; and 288; Simonides 22 West; and Bacchylides 10.42–3.
- 11 For catalogues and discussion, see Kaempf-Dimitriadou 1979 and Arafat 1990, 66–76. For a sculptural version, see the polychrome terracotta akroterion, Olympia T 2/T 2A/Tc 1049.
- 12 See references at Ar. *Ach.* 142–4 and V. 97–9; for archaeological

evidence from Athens, see *IG* 1³ 1402, 1403, 1404 bis, 1404 ter, 1405, 1405 bis and 1406.

13 See Lear and Cantarella 2008, 115–18 for the few pederastic scenes showing anal intercourse (and for the more numerous scenes indicating the *erastēs*' interest in anal sex more subtly).

14 See also Barringer 2001, 70–124.

15 For other statuary with pederastic implications, see Steiner 1998, 132–3 on victor statues and Stewart 1997, 80–2 on the Parthenon frieze.

16 See Plu. *Pel.* 18; also Leitaο 2002, who argues against the band's historicity.

17 See Hubbard 1998, 50–9.

18 In addition to the lines cited here, see for instance Ar. *Ach.* 263–5, V. 97–9 and Av. 705–8.

19 Speeches in Greek trials were often recited by the prosecutor or by the defendant, but written by a speech writer, here Lysias. Aeschines 1, by contrast, was delivered by its author.

20 Note also the reference at Dem. 19.283 to Timarchos' children.

21 Hubbard 1998, 67–8 and 2008, especially 192–3, suggests that these sections may have been added when the speech was revised for publication, as they would please a more literate and elite audience. This is not impossible, but the distinction between “legitimate love” and prostitution is a focal theme not only in these passages but in the entire speech (see J. Shapiro 2010, 141–90).

22 See Buffière 1980, 451–80 for references.

23 See for example Plu. *Alc.* 3.1–5.3, *Pel.* 18–19, *Amat.* passim; Strato in *AP* 12.1–11, 175–229, 234–55; Ach. Tat. 1.7–8, 12–14, 2.33–8, Longus 4.11–12, 16–21; Ath. 13.563c–565f, 601a–605d; Philostratus sophista, *Epistulae* (*Love Letters*) 7K, 27K; Lucian, *Amores*.

24 See, however, Goldhill 1995, 102–9 for this passage's complicated ironies.

25 See Williams 2010, 15–66 for sources and discussion.

26 See also 1.8 and 1.9 for his love for a youth named Marathus.

27 See Bremmer 1980, Sergent 1986a and 1986b.

28 See Herdt 1984, 31–2, 48–54 and Dover 1988, 121–2.

29 Foucault 1986, 237 for instance lists Musonius, Plutarch, Soranus, and Rufus.

30 See Cantarella 1992, 173–86 for references.

31 See Fisher 1998 and 2000 for the idea that non-elite Athenians may have participated in the paradigmatically elite activities of

athletics, the *sumposion*, and pederasty.

32 Davidson 2007, 27 claims that other Greeks found Spartan practice in this regard alarming, but, while the Athenians both joked about the Spartans having anal intercourse (Ar. *Lys.* 1174) and defended the Spartan version of pederasty as particularly chaste (Xen. *Lac.* 2.12–14), there is no other explicit reference in Greek literature to the early age of their *erōmenoi*, so this assertion is dubious.

33 On this and on the evidence for age-equal male–male relations, see Chapter 8. It should be noted that age-equal relations among youths (in strong contrast to those among men) seem to have been regarded in the same light as pederasty (see Xen. *Smp.* 4.10–25, and many fifth- and fourth-century courtship scenes).

34 Davidson (2007, 444) claims that vase painting presents “cautionary images, images, in short, of anxiety,” yet he offers no iconographical evidence for this claim. Such evidence would indeed be hard to find, given the idealizing tendencies of pederastic iconography (Lear and Cantarella 2008, 23–105). In vase painting, the courtship of *erōmenoi* portrayed as pre-pubescent and that of figures portrayed as adolescent is presented in strictly analogous and invariably idealizing ways.

35 This view, which ultimately derives from Dover's work (see for instance 1989, 103), was formulated in influential ways by Foucault 1985, 215–25 and Halperin 1990, 29–36.

36 These arguments, which appear in Lear 2004, will be presented more extensively in a forthcoming volume.

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Chapter 8

Peer Homosexuality

Thomas K. Hubbard

Adolescent Love

Most discussions of ancient homosexual desire and conduct assume pederasty as its ubiquitous form, marginalizing any deviations as rare and offensive to mainstream protocols. To some extent this is a justified reaction to those who, like John Boswell (1980), have too blithely conflated Greco-Roman same-sex behavior with the norms of modern androphile homosexual and lesbian identity. Without question, the majority of Greek texts and art works that treat male-male sexual relations do focus on pederasty, but this may have more to do with discursive and artistic preoccupations with adolescent beauty and development than with any accurate demographic index of who was doing what with whom. Even Michel Foucault, whose work was seminal for social constructionist study of the history of sexuality (see Chapter 4), noted in passing:

We must not imagine in any case that only this type of relation was practiced; one finds many references to male love relationships that did not conform to this schema and did not include this “age differential.” We would be just as mistaken to suppose that, though practiced, these other forms of relations were frowned upon and regarded as unseemly. Relations between young boys were deemed completely natural and in keeping with their condition. (Foucault 1986, 194)

He goes on to note that we find less comment on such age-equal relations in the literary sources because “they were not an object of moral solicitude or of a very great theoretical interest” and “did not belong to the domain of active and intense problematization” (Foucault 1986, 195). Nevertheless, a proper survey of Greco-Roman

sexualities must include examination of what evidence we have for homosexual relations that were not purely pederastic.

Foucault points to two examples of erotic desire among young people of approximately the same age: (1) as the adolescent Charmides enters the room, everyone takes notice and feels desire for him, even the youngest boys present in the wrestling school (Plato, *Charmides* 154C); and (2) Xenophon describes the love of the still beardless Kritoboulos for Kleinias (Xenophon, *Symposium* 4.23; cf. *Memorabilia* 1.3.8–14). However, neither of these examples is unproblematic: the handsome and charming Charmides died at a young age, fighting to support the hated regime of the Thirty Tyrants after Athens' defeat by Sparta, and Kritoboulos was sent to Socrates by his father precisely to cure him of his homosexual tendencies (Xenophon, *Symposium* 4.24–6, *Oeconomicus* 2.7).¹ The satirical point in Plato and Xenophon's portraits of these two youths is not so much a reflection of any irregularity in their being attracted (or attractive) to boys their own age; it is rather that elite homosexual culture more generally was becoming problematic in the democratic Athens of the late fifth century (a point I argue at length in Hubbard in press a).

That “youth delights youth” was so obvious as to constitute a proverbial phrase, which Socrates cites to suggest that older lovers, who have lost their looks and have different interests, must be disgusting to the young (Plato, *Phaedrus* 240B–C).² The carefree sexual availability of other youths was equally taken for granted in the pederastic poetry attributed to Theognis, contrasting sharply with the often resentful tone and complaints of the older lover:

In youth you can sleep the night through with an age-mate,
Unloading the desire for lusty action.

(Theognis 1063–4)

Elsewhere the poet refers to the boy's attractiveness to other boys (Theognis 1320). In a little noticed passage in one of Pindar's victory odes, the poet speaks of the new erotic opportunities that will be afforded the boy who has just triumphed at Delphi:

I expect by my songs to make the crowned Hippokleas
Still more splendid to look upon for both his age-mates and
older men,
And a heartthrob for young maids. For
Different loves tickle the fancies of different folks.

(Pindar, *Pythian* 10.57–60)

Hippokleas can have his choice among three alternatives: boys his own age, older men, and girls. Whichever tickles his fancy, it will now

be available to the star athlete (for more on the erotic dynamics of this passage, see Hubbard 1995, 43–5). The late Hellenistic poet Meleager (AP 12.109.1 = 61 Gow–Page, “delicate Diodoros, casting a flame upon his young age-mates”) suggests that boys still fell in love with other boys four centuries later.

An interesting passage in Aeschines' *Against Timarchos* (1.49) indicates that adult pederasts like Misgolas (whose inclinations were also noted in comedy: see Antiphanes, Fr. 27.12–18 PCG) would cultivate a youthful appearance, presumably to make themselves more attractive to the boys and youths they pursued. Aeschines makes these comments about Misgolas looking younger than his actual age in order to suggest that there was a significant age difference between Misgolas and Timarchos and thus the relationship was more likely to be one of prostitution. However, as in so many other parts of this speech, Aeschines is attempting to confuse his audience: Misgolas and Timarchos were in fact about the same age when they lived together, and those in the audience who said, “Herakles! He is not much older than Timarchos!” were absolutely right.³ That Aeschines is at such pains to deny that Misgolas and Timarchos were the same age suggests that such age-equal relationships among young men were not as problematic in most Athenians' eyes as age-differential relations.

In addition to this literary material, our strongest evidence for age-equal homosexual relations among youths is found in the record of Greek vase painting. Dover's (1978) groundbreaking survey of the visual evidence for Greek homosexuality unfortunately neglected numerous scenes that did not fit his assumed model of relations that were always age-differential and hierarchical. Even the commendable recent survey of Lear and Cantarella (2008) pays scant attention to depictions of age-equal youths. Scenes of courtship, reciprocal engagement, and even intercourse between youths with little or no difference in age occur from the earliest stages of red figure vase painting but become especially common after 460 bce, exactly the point at which representations of intergenerational courtship become rare. In an infrequently cited but important Dutch study of the iconographic material, Hupperts (2000, I, 181–8, 211; and see Hupperts 1988) estimates that these, as well as non-pederastic scenes involving adult males, may constitute as much as one third of all the homoerotic depictions extant on red figure vases.

Let us first examine a familiar piece, the Getty psykter by Smikros, datable to around 510 bce (Figs. 12a–d in Hubbard 2003). This vase features a wrap-around frieze with four youthful couples involved in different phases of courtship. Two of the four pairs are to all appearances nearly age-equal. With the Getty psykter, we are in the fortunate position of having most of the figures labeled with names: in

one pair, Hegerthos leans in the direction of Andriskos and reaches out to fondle his penis. Andriskos opens up his splendid red mantle to reveal himself to his friend and stretches out his own right arm to touch Hegerthos' elbow. The direct eye contact and physical engagement clearly suggest that the attraction is mutual, even if Hegerthos is the one cast in the role of the suitor. The possession of a walking staff may encode that he has just passed some official rite of maturation such as the *dokimasia*, but it could also just denote that he is the one who has come to visit Andriskos. On the same vessel we see another couple who have progressed one step further in their lovemaking, embracing arm in arm and drawing together for a kiss as well as having manual stimulation of the genitals. The youth on the left looks just a bit taller, but this may be due in part to his uplifted left foot and more aggressive stance; the age difference, if there is one, could not be more than a year or two. It is worth noting that the two other pairs on the vase, where the age difference is clearly greater, show less reciprocation on the part of the younger partner, ranging from the rather tentative response of Leagros to the outright rejection of Melas by Antias. The composition of the piece as a whole thus suggests that a lover's closeness in age was not only common, but a desirable trait from the perspective of the beloved.

Sometimes, as in the work of Douris (London E317), the interaction between the youths may be implicit, as with this youth's admiration of another, who plays music. But it can also be more overt, as with a youth who offers a crown to another, who opens up his cloak to reveal his assets (London E175 = [Figure 8.1](#)). Age-equal intimacy also occurs on ceramics from outside Attica, as we see on a Boeotian lekythos from Tanagra (Athens 1121); the two youths are wrapped together in a single cloak, which suggests that they sleep underneath the same cloak (compare Socrates and Alcibiades in Plato's *Symposium*, 219B–C),⁴ but the presence of attendants with white fighting cocks suggests some connection with erotic courtship.

Figure 8.1 Hydria by the Troilus Painter (c. 480 bce). Youth crowns another.

Source: London E175 ARV 297.17. © The Trustees of the British Museum.



As well as mimicking all the more formalized gestures and modalities of courtship and lovemaking involving men and boys that we know from pederastic iconography, young men are prone to engage in sexual horseplay with one another, whether in the gym or at the banquet (London E71 = [Figure 8.2](#)). The reverse *apostrophē* that we see in this last piece effectively invites us to join in the fun. Sometimes the horseplay turns to what we might call sexual experimentation (Turin 4117 = Hubbard 2003, Fig. 15) or even to a wholesale bisexual free-for-all (Boston 95.61 = Dover 1978, Fig. R223), where the youths are as likely to penetrate one another as the female prostitute in the scene. It is not unknown for these scenes of drunken revelry to result even in the penetration of bearded adult men, as we sometimes see on Tyrrhenian amphoras. Those few scenes in Attic vase painting where we see a youth being anally penetrated always involve another youth of approximately the same age (London F65 = Lear and Cantarella 2008, Fig. 6.1A) or somewhat larger in stature, but not necessarily older (Hubbard 2003, Fig. 8).

Figure 8.2 Kylix by the Brygos Painter (c. 480 bce). Youths play *kottabos* at the symposium.

Source: London E71. © The Trustees of the British Museum.



The figure of Eros (Berlin 3168) has been studied in some detail by both Alan Shapiro (1992) and Andrew Lear (Lear and Cantarella 2008, 151–63). By depicting Eros himself as a beautiful youth, Greek artists acknowledge that youths can themselves be desiring subjects: the categories *erōmenos* and *erastēs* really make no sense with Eros, as he simultaneously embodies both. Like a boy, he is lithe, nimble, and androgynous; but, like a man, he is an aggressive pursuer who has no inhibition in consummating his desires, which are typically directed at youths who look no younger or older than himself (Athens 15375, London E397, London E39, Boston 95.31). Eros (London E126 = [Figure 8.3](#)) commonly occurs as an allegorical mediator between lover and beloved, but what is striking, as Andrew Lear has observed (Lear and Cantarella 2008, 157–9), is that these scenes become particularly common in late fifth-century vase painting. I would add that these scenes with Eros usually bind together two youths who are equal in age (see also Paris CA1587). In [Figure 8.3](#) we see a lyre-bearing Eros

moving from a youth with a lyre to another, more athletic youth who holds an oil flask, perhaps symbolically conveying the first youth's gift of celebratory music to the athlete.

Figure 8.3 Eros flies between a lyre-playing youth and a young athlete.

Source: London E126. © The Trustees of the British Museum.



London E501 ([Figure 8.4](#)), from the last quarter of the fifth century, provides a particularly interesting scene. The clothed boy on the left watches the naked boy in the center bend over to crown a seated Eros, who plays with knucklebones on the ground. All three figures appear similar in age and appearance, as if they are playmates. Eros' interest in the knucklebones neatly expresses the metaphor of love as a game, but the two human boys are of more interest. The pairing of a naked and a clothed figure usually designates the latter as the admirer or lover of the former, whose body he gazes at. In this case, the gaze lands upon the naked boy's back; that boy's forward-bent posture emphasizes the availability of his exposed buttocks. Should we understand his crowning of Eros merely as a metonymic expression of his own status as an object of the first boy's *erōs*, or is he actually making an offering of thanks to Eros for having found an interested *erastēs*?

Figure 8.4 Bell Krater by the Amykos Painter (c. 415 bce). Boy watches another crown Eros as he plays a game.

Source: London E501. © The Trustees of the British Museum.



A similar, but much finer vase of the late period, in the Nicholson Museum at the University of Sydney (Figure 8.5a and Figure 8.5b), shows an unhappy-looking woman crowning a puzzled or frustrated Eros who sits on a rock, chin in hand, wings bent uncertainly, staring out straight at us. To the woman's right are two naked youths, one holding a fillet; they are absorbed in conversation with each other but seemingly oblivious of the woman and her activity. Is the woman to be imagined as a frustrated lover of one of the youths, who takes no notice? Is the point that the youths are more interested in each other than in her?

Figure 8.5 Lucanian amphora attributed to the Palermo Painter (400-375 bce). A woman crowns Eros as two athletes converse.

Source: Nicholson Museum, University of Sydney NM 83.32.



(a)



(b)

Both of these last two vases, and to a lesser degree some of the others involving Eros, require us to engage in interpretation of the scene's significance. Nothing is explicit, as with the earlier red figure and black figure vases showing courtship and even consummation. I would argue that this more riddling and hermeneutic style is especially characteristic of late fifth-century representations of same-sex relations. London F144-A shows a scene similar to that on the Sydney vase: one long-haired youth offers a fillet to another, who remains tightly wrapped up in his cloak and unresponsive; on the other side, another age-equal pair interact, but in this case the youth on the left is reaching down to pull something out of his cloak and the youth on the right, although remaining tightly wrapped, does look down at the object and opens his lips as if to speak. Should we see these gift presentations as erotically motivated, and the recipient who remains tightly wrapped in his cloak as the usual paradigm of boyish modesty? We might; but we might also, depending upon our orientation and preferences, interpret the scenes more innocently. The vase painter leaves it up to the viewer whether to read this artifact erotically.

In an earlier publication (Hubbard 2005, 146–58) I have argued for precisely this kind of ambiguity in many athletic scenes from the last quarter of the fifth century. In the work of the Eretria Painter (for example, San Antonio 86.134.80 = Hubbard 2003, Figs. 24b–c),⁵ we see age-equal pairs in gymnastic settings; that one is clothed and one

naked in each case and that the clothed figure often appears to be talking to or presenting something to his unclothed friend suggest that we might indeed read these scenes as courtship. But this is implicit, a subtle suggestion rather than something forced upon us. The youths could merely be conversing. Equally inviting to interpretation are the pelikai by the closely related Calliope Painter (Tampa 1986.068 = [Figure 8.6](#), New York 25.78.68, Verona 53), showing a trainer (identified by his forked staff) who looks down to inspect the genitals of the boy on the right, who opens his cloak in a manner reminiscent of boys in courtship scenes of the early fifth century. Is he inspecting the boy's genitals to determine whether he is correctly infibulated or to see what age class he should be assigned to? Possibly, but if the boy is undergoing an official inspection, one would expect him to be fully naked. Or is there an erotic relationship between these two boys? And what are we to make of the fact that the umpire/trainer, rather than being an older authority figure, appears to be exactly the same age as the boy being inspected? Again, the vase plays upon ambiguity to allow consumers license to interpret it either way.

Figure 8.6 Pelike attributed to the Calliope Painter (c. 425 bce).
Trainer gazes at a youth's privates.

Source: The Tampa Museum of Art, Joseph Veach Noble Collection, 1986.068.



Finally, I would like to examine a kylix by the Eretria Painter located at my own university (Austin 1980, 38 = [Figure 8.7a](#) and [Figure 8.7b](#)). We might interpret the athlete and trainer on the interior innocently enough, but the sides lead us to believe that more is going on. On one side ([Figure 8.7a](#)) we have a scene that is very typical of this artists' kylixes: two pairs of youths stand in conversation. The two clothed figures appear to be courting the two naked athletes holding a discus; note that the clothed figure on the right appears to offer a sprig of laurel as a gift or award to the athlete, and his lips are parted as if to show that he is the one now speaking. The mutual eye contact of the figures expresses genuine engagement and interest, but the athlete makes no effort to reach out and receive the sprig. Note that he moves his right foot ever so subtly to the side, placing it on top of the foot of the clothed, staff-bearing youth, who is conversing with the other athlete; he does so as if to make a claim on the youth's attention or as a secret signal that he should take notice.

Figure 8.7 Kylix by the Eretria Painter (c. 430 bce). Athletes and clothed youths interact.

Source: Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin, Archer M. Huntington Museum Fund and the James R. Daugherty, Jr. Foundation, 1980.38.



(a)



(b)

But the other side of the kylix ([Figure 8.7b](#)) breaks out of the conventions of this type scene. Note the pair on the left this time. Again, we see a sprig of laurel, but it appears to be the naked athlete

who is handing it to his friend, who is modestly wrapped up in his cloak. The athlete's posture, which strides forward boldly, and the position of his hand as well as the friend's lack of arm extension make it clear that in this case the athlete is offering a gift, not receiving it. Or perhaps he is proudly displaying it, to impress his friend. One cannot see the athlete's groin very clearly because there is a scratch mark in this area, probably the work of a prudish former owner; this vase was once in private hands. However, just below the athlete's navel one sees two converging lines that may well have been the tip of an erection; of course, this too may be the work of an enthusiastic former owner who interpreted the athlete's gestures as consistent with sexual excitement. The laurel sprig is a token of victory; in his triumph, the athlete employs it as an erotic talisman, to attract his favorite (recall the erotic opportunities that Pindar says come to victorious boy athletes). So the athlete is no longer the passive object of a public gaze and courtship from others, but he has now become self-confident enough to do the courting himself. Note, however, that we have again a subtle game going on with the feet: in this case, the figure with a forked staff, who must be a trainer, appears to press his heel upon the metatarsals of the excited athlete's foot. Far from being erotic, this can actually be rather painful, the kind of move an athletic trainer might make to suppress undesirable behavior on the part of a boy under his charge.

But again, as in other work of this period, we are challenged to interpret every gesture and position. Even in these age-equal scenes, one member of each pair tends to be strongly marked as the lover and the other as the beloved. One figure is aggressive and self-confident, the other either compliant or reserved. What this suggests is that there was a certain interval of youth, which we might roughly identify with the ephebic stage around the ages of 18–20, when one might legitimately be either an *erastēs* or an *erōmenos*. Different boys would mature and become sexually experienced at different rates; they would show the initiative and masculine self-confidence characteristic of an *erastēs* at different times. The competitiveness among boys in attracting the attention of men surely acted as training for the more challenging competitiveness in pursuing boys in turn. Once they started to pursue another boy, boys would be competing not only against their own age cohort, but against older men as well. At this stage they would truly be men, even if they still looked the same as the boys they courted.

But let us return to the question of how late fifth-century vases represent sexuality differently from those earlier than 460 or 470 bce. As Andrew Lear has recently noted too, pederasty does not disappear as a representational focus, but its expression changes: later on in the

fifth-century we see more scenes involving gods, *sumposia*, and “youths in conversation.” The homoeroticism is either displaced into the realm of myth or it becomes more implicit and coded. Lear attributes this change not to any variation in the social status of pederasty but to “a general trend toward prudery” (Lear and Cantarella 2008, 175). However, I am not sure these two developments can be so neatly segregated: more prudish societies are generally less tolerant of minority sexual practices.

I have elsewhere argued (Hubbard 1998) that pederasty was mainly an element of elite habitus in Athens, and the rising political dominance of what one might call the “middle class” within Athenian democracy led to a privileging of middle-class taste—as reflected in the anti-elite posture of comedy, the simplified diction of Euripidean tragedy, and the marginalization of explicit sexuality in art. I would qualify that view now only with the observation that, as the general living standard of the urban populace grew at the height of the Athenian empire, painted vases ceased to be a luxury product but became commonplace even in many non-elite households; this explains the inferior workmanship we see in the late fifth century, as painted vases came to be mass-produced and the luxury market turned to silver vessels, which have almost all been melted down and have thus disappeared from our archaeological record. Yesterday's luxury goods become today's knickknacks, appearing in every middle-class household's dining room.

Another factor important in the social evolution of Athenian attitudes toward pederasty was the increasing institutionalization and commercialization of educational praxis. The popularity of sophistic and rhetorical education, open as it was to all who could pay, dethroned the primacy of traditional pederastic pedagogy, which had been based on class selection and interpersonal *charis*, “grace, charm” (as we see in the *agōn* of Aristophanes' *Clouds*, divided between the Greater Discourse of traditional, moralistic pederasty and the licentious, relativistic, all-too-clever Lesser Discourse of sophistic rhetoric). However, non-hierarchical and non-pedagogical relations of youthful peer sexuality were less contested in this environment.

I am not arguing that the practice of man-boy pederasty was in any way less common in the late fifth century, or that the practice of age-equal male homoeroticism was more common. Vase painting cannot be used as evidence of the demographic frequency of any represented activity. What it does provide evidence for is the level and style of cultural discourse surrounding a given activity: that man-boy pederasty could be quite frequently and openly represented during the sixth century and in the first third of the fifth century suggests that it was an acceptable topic for the kind of people who used painted

drinking vessels during that period. That it ceased to be so represented in vase painting of the later fifth century suggests that it was no longer so welcome in the family home of that period. As the market for painted wares broadened, pederastic enthusiasts had to collect antique vessels, purchase silver, or make do with modern, mass-marketed PG-13 works, in which the homoeroticism was at best coded and ambiguous.

That male adolescent sexual activity did not provoke more extensive comment in literary sources can be attributed to two reasons: (1) it was so commonplace among all classes as to seem unremarkable;⁶ and (2) since our texts are almost exclusively written from an adult male point of view, they privilege the passions of adult male subjects. The second reason is, I think, obvious. With regard to the first reason, I would ask: How many literary texts discuss in any detail sex between husband and wife? We have *Iliad* 14, Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, and the end of Xenophon's *Symposium*; but, given the scarcity of literary references to marital sex by comparison with references to other kinds of sexuality, one might conclude that husband–wife sex was infrequent in classical Greece. Of course, it is seldom discussed precisely because it is so normal; the variations from the sexual norm are what interests the audience more. As James Davidson (2007, 49) has correctly observed, Greek literary texts were for the most part reticent about exactly who does what to whom (and, I would add, at what age), so we really should not even look to them for certain kinds of information.

Those texts that do note the physical and emotional attraction youths feel for each other mention it in an utterly nonchalant fashion, as if to imply that such feelings were natural and self-explanatory, in no way exceptional. Boys' sexual horseplay and experimentation with each other did not require the elaborate moral apologetics and sexual “protocols” Foucault and others have posited for pederasty. Boys were so used to wrestling, oiling, and sponging each others' naked bodies that we should be surprised if they did not experience arousal, particularly in a culture where opportunities with the other sex were limited at this age; Scanlon (2002, 234–6) and others have argued that the practice of infibulation was meant to guard against the ever present danger of sexual excitation in the palaestra. When Aristophanes talks about the “leather phallus, hanging down, red, thick at the end, a source of laughter to boys” (*Clouds* 538–9), he takes it for granted both that small boys (he uses the word *paidion*) formed part of the comic audience and that they found the bawdier aspects of comedy especially appealing. Polymorphous perversity certainly did not begin with children in late nineteenth-century Vienna, although it may have been more striking to clinicians then and there by virtue of

its contrast with the tight-laced adult sexual mores of the time. We have no good reason to think that Greek adolescent boys were any less randy and sexual than their modern counterparts.

Lesbian Love

Love between women should not necessarily be assumed to follow the male pederastic model, although in some cases it may have. Here also the iconographic evidence of Greek pottery is helpful, although the examples are less numerous; this kind of evidence has been usefully collected in Martos Montiel (1996, 67–102) and in Rabinowitz (2002). Our earliest example is the seventh-century plate from Thera that appears as [Figure 9.1](#) in this volume: no difference in age marks the two women displayed there, and their desire appears to be fully mutual, as each holds a crown ready to offer as a gift to the other. One of the women initiates the chin-touching gesture so typical of suitors in male pederastic scenes on black figure vases (see Chapter 7 in this volume), while the other woman reciprocates by extending her right arm around her partner's waist. With very few exceptions, the women in these scenes appear to be entirely equal in age and stature, and nothing codes one as the lover or the other as the beloved; but their physical intimacy is nevertheless made clear.⁷ After a thorough and subtle investigation of these scenes, Nancy Rabinowitz (2002, 130) contrasts them markedly both with male pederastic and with heterosexual representations, insofar as they show “no sign of age or power differential between the participants.”

Our earliest literary evidence for female–female attractions is also seventh century, in the poetry of Alcman and Sappho. Alcman's Spartan maiden choruses, like the penchant for female athletics at Sparta (Scanlon 2002, 121–38), served the social function of showcasing female beauty and desirability for an audience of eligible male spectators (Clark 1996; Stehle 1997, 30–9). In Alcman's self-reflexive lyric, the young women of the chorus interpellate male desire by expressing their own attraction to each other's beauty, as we see in the praise of Astymeloisa's seductive glance in Fragment 3.61–72 (see Chapter 9 in this volume) or in the choristers' desire for each other in Fragment 1.64–77:

Neither is an unlimited abundance
Of purple cloth able to protect me,
Nor a snake crafted
All in gold, not even a Lydian snood,

Ornament of violet-browed
Young women,
Not even the hair of Nanno,
No indeed not even godly Areta
Nor Sylakis and Kleesisera together,
Nor will you go to Ainesimbrotas's house and say,
"May Astaphis become mine,
And may Philylla look my direction,
And Damareta and lovely Wianthemis."
However, Hagesichora watches over me [*or wears me away
with passion*].

Regardless of which textual variant we adopt in the last line (*tērei* or *teirei*), the choral leader Hagesichora appears as the capping term in the progression of praises bestowed upon each girl of the chorus. In my view, the first four girls named (Nanno, Areta, Sylakis, Kleesisera) form the semi-chorus that hears this stanza, and the next four girls, framed in a hypothetical (but unreal) wish for intimacy, form the other semi-chorus, from which the first one has been separated. But neither group can compare in beauty and erotic force to Hagesichora.

The homoeroticism of the choral interaction in this complex poem is central to Claude Calame's (1997, 244–63) influential study of the chorus' social function, but his interpretation relies excessively on an initiatory framework that insists on an age difference between the chorus leaders (Hagesichora and Agido) and the other girls of the chorus and foregrounds the relationship of the chorus with its leaders, to the neglect of the erotic language that binds the choristers to each other. As Stehle (1997, 86–7) objects, there is no clear mark of age difference between them: all are clearly designated as *parthenoi* ("maidens"), whereas an initiatory framework would require the supervision of a sexually experienced woman. Gentili (1988, 71–7), while not rejecting an initiatory function, sees the sexual dynamic of Fragment 1 as a kind of lesbian betrothal of the two chorus leaders, who are praised by the other girls in the manner of a wedding hymn; but again this downplays the implied homoerotic bonds among all the participants in the ceremony (see Parker 1993, 325–31). Significant for our present study is that this language of erotic attraction is used among girls equal in age and status, all unmarried maidens on the verge of sexual availability.

Although Calame and Gentili both see Alcman's maiden chorus and Sappho's poetry as manifestations of a common initiatory institution, we should be cautious about assuming that the same institutions of female socialization existed in such culturally diverse milieus as Sparta and Lesbos. The question of Sappho's relationship with her circle is treated in more detail in Chapters 9 and 20. After a critical

review of previous scholarly reconstructions of Sappho's social context, Holt Parker (1993) proposed adult female *sumposia* as the site for her poetic performances and for the erotic relationships they describe. However, this thesis is just as speculative as any other, and Sappho's poetry reveals little concern with wine and the sympotic topics familiar from male-authored lyric poetry of the archaic period. Lardinois (1994) reasserts the more common view that Sappho's partners are indeed younger, and this age difference between her and most of the girls in her circle is strongly confirmed by a newly discovered fragment (the "new Sappho," quoted and discussed in Chapter 20) in which she laments the feebleness of her old age, contrasting the nimble limbs of those who dance around her. In the same vein as Parker, Greene (2002, 83) regards the relationships in Sappho's poetry as non-hierarchical and symmetrical: "distinctions between lover and beloved, subject and object, often dissolve through a complex merging of female voices." While we can certainly concede the mutual love between many Sapphic companions, not every relationship was reciprocated (in this regard, I still find more persuasive the interpretation of Sappho's *Hymn to Aphrodite* (= Fr. 1 V) offered by Giacomelli (1980). Other poems (most notably Frr. 94 and 96 V) do show Sappho assuming a magisterial role, teaching her friends on the basis of the superior wealth of experience one would expect from someone older.

Nevertheless, later literary evidence concerning homoerotic relations among women does not conform to an age-differential model. Aristophanes' speech in Plato's *Symposium* famously traces the origin of the three principal sexual orientations (heterosexual, male homosexual, and female homosexual) in mankind's descent from a primeval race of double-humans; but, whereas Plato's Aristophanes goes out of his way to specify that those descended from primeval double males love men when they are boys and boys when they are men (191E–2C), he makes no such distinction when speaking of those descended from primeval double females. Under the Roman Empire, Lucian (*Dialogue of the Courtesans* 5) speaks of two wealthy women who live together as if they were man and wife; the distinction between them is clearly not based on age but a butch/femme dyad. Similarly, Latin authors who speak of lesbianism speak of a "masculine" partner and a feminine partner in the relationship, not of an older and a younger one (Seneca the Elder, *Controversies* 1.2.23; Seneca, *Moral Epistle* 95.21; Martial 1.90, 7.67, 7.70).

Adult Love

Perhaps the most famous example of two adult men who remain in a close and loving relationship for their entire lives is that of the epic heroes Achilles and Patroklos, who may have started out as a pederastic couple (Patroklos appears to be a bit older—see *Iliad* 11.785–8)⁸ but were certainly both adults by the tenth year of the Trojan War. The Homeric epics make no explicit reference to homosexual desire or acts between the two (for the contrary view, see Clarke 1978 and Davidson 2007, 255–84); indeed, *Iliad* 9.663–8 shows the two heroes sleeping on opposite sides of the same tent, each beside his own concubine. However, their relationship is certainly characterized as romantic and sexual in nature by the time of Aeschylus' *Myrmidons* (Frr. 135–7 *TGF*), as well as in authors like Plato (*Symposium* 179E–80B) and Aeschines (1.141–50). Epic tradition is generally reticent about same-sex love because, whatever may have been going on in Crete or Sparta at this time, it lacked sufficient pan-Hellenic status to be acknowledged in poems that were meant to appeal to all Greeks. Homosexuality is thus left as a possible reading for those members of the audience inclined to it, but it nowhere forces itself upon us.

Both Aeschylus and Plato's Phaidros in the *Symposium* attempt to read the relationship in conventional pederastic terms. Whereas Aeschylus had characterized Achilles as the *erastēs* of Patroklos (as is also assumed by Pindar in *Olympian* 10.16–19; see Hubbard 2005, 138–40), Phaidros insists that it must have been the other way around, since Achilles was more beautiful and, according to *Iliad* 11.787, younger. However, Phaidros exaggerates the age difference by claiming Achilles was “much younger,” and there is no evidence that Patroklos had ever before played the stereotypically pederastic role of Achilles' mentor or tutor (a function more closely associated with the centaur Cheiron); indeed in the *Iliad* it is Achilles who gives advice and instructions to Patroklos when the latter dons Achilles' armor and enters battle. Moreover, it is clearly Achilles who is the hero of higher status, both as son of the king of Phthia and as leader of the Myrmidons; Patroklos, on the other hand, is styled as his *opadōn* (“squire”). As the subordinate figure in the relationship, Patroklos can hardly be the *erastēs*—at least not in the usual sense posited by Dover, Halperin, and others. Indeed what Phaidros fails to grasp is the genuine inadequacy and irrelevance of his own (as well as Aeschylus') conceptual schemata when it comes to analyzing a relationship such as that between Achilles and Patroklos (see Hubbard in press b). Both Phaidros and Aeschylus run up against the problems inherent in trying to reinterpret Bronze Age heroic relationships in contemporary terms

—a difficulty that scholars of gender and sexuality today have with the Greeks in general.

Aristotle (*Nicomachean Ethics* 8.4) acknowledges that pederastic relationships rooted in love of character rather than in mere physical attraction are apt to last longer, in some cases developing into life-long relationships: “but many couples continue the relationship, if, as a result of spending time together, they come to love each other's character, because they are of similar character” (1157^a9–11). This kind of commitment is very similar to the “Uranian love” that Pausanias extols in Plato's *Symposium* (181C–D) as leading to life-long relationships and as being properly directed to older youths capable of thinking for themselves. Indeed this is precisely the relationship Pausanias himself practices with his beloved Agathon: they are identified as lover and beloved as early as the dramatic date of the *Protagoras* (315D–E), which is usually assumed to be around 430 bce, and they retain that status many years later in *Symposium* (193B), dated to 416 bce. Aelian (*Varia historia* 2.21) places them still together as lovers at the court of Archelaos of Macedon, whose reign lasted from 413 to 399 bce. He refers to their partnership as being well known; while the particular anecdote Aelian relates is probably apocryphal, the connection with Archelaos is doubtlessly historical and finds some confirmation in Aristophanes' *Frogs* at 83–5, where Agathon is said to be no longer in Athens, but off at the “banquets of the blessed ones”—a probable allusion to the Hyperboreans, which may of course be a metonymy for Macedonians. That Archelaos was an ambitious patron of the Hellenic arts and of tragedy in particular is well documented; he is also known to have patronized Euripides (Revermann 1999–2000).

However, unlike Euripides, Agathon and Pausanias appear to have relocated to Macedon permanently, not finding life in Athens pleasing to them. Could it have been due to the unusual nature of their life-long erotic relationship and the ridicule to which it exposed them? Who can forget Aristophanes' portrayal of the luxury-loving, effeminate Agathon dressed in women's garb so he can better understand female emotions, in the prologue of the *Thesmophoriazusae*? This play suggests that Agathon was still resident in Athens in early 411 bce, but his and Pausanias' departure may have been later in the same year, perhaps in the wake of the suppressed oligarchical coup.

Another passage from the *Frogs* (52–70), just a few lines before the mention of Agathon, implies that erotic desire for a grown man is the most *queer* (i.e. counter-normative) form of interpersonal desire, a perversion just this side of necrophilia. Dionysos tells Herakles of a sudden “desire” (*pothos*) he has conceived while on board a ship.

Reading this word in its usual erotic sense, Herakles inquires about the object of the *pothos*. Was it a woman? “No indeed” (*Ou dēta*). A boy? “No way” (*Oudamōs*). A grown man? “Aaargh!” (*Apapai*). The arrangement of the three terms, together with the increasingly emphatic negatives, suggests an ordered sequence of erotic attractions, ranging from the most common to the *outré*. Dionysos is discomfited even further when Herakles suggests a specific man, namely the effeminate Kleisthenes, a favorite target of Aristophanes' mockery for his lack of a beard. The only term lower on the scale is the *pothos* Dionysos finally admits to, that for a specific dead man, namely Euripides.

This and other references in old and middle comedy suggest that sexual relations between adult males were the butt of ridicule, but not unknown in classical Athens. The Aristotelian *Problema* 4.26 discusses the aetiology of why some men, even as adults, continue to prefer taking the passive role in sex (a topic later taken up by the medical writer Soranus, whose work is preserved in Latin paraphrase by Caelius Aurelianus, *Chronic Diseases* 4.9). An infamous passage from Plato's *Gorgias* (494C–5A) also acknowledges the existence in Athens of men called *kinaidoi*, sexual compulsives who fulfill their desires without restraint or self-control; Socrates likens them to men who scratch themselves all the time. Comic fragments suggest that certain spots in Athens, such as the ruins of Kimon's suburban estate (Cratinus, Fr. 160 *PCG*) or the vicinity of Mt. Lycabettus (Theopompos, Fr. 30 *PCG*), were notorious meeting places for such men.⁹ As Amy Richlin (1993) and Rabun Taylor (1997) have posited for ancient Rome, it may be legitimate to speak of a “cinaedic subculture” in classical Athens too, a small minority of men engaging in promiscuous and habitual coitus with each other.

This is quite some distance from the kind of life-long monogamous commitment that Pausanias advocates in the *Symposium* and practices in his relationship with Agathon. Nevertheless, these are the images most Athenians had of men who have sex with men, and the stereotype that both Agathon and Pausanias surely encountered there. In contrast, Thessaly and Macedonia may have encouraged adult warrior comradeship, as Davidson (2007, 360–80) has proposed, citing Xenophon's depiction of the Thessalian commander Meno and his bearded beloved (*Anabasis* 2.6.28) and various anecdotes concerning relationships at the Macedonian court (see Polybius 8.11.5–13, citing the fourth-century historian Theopompos). If so, one can understand why Pausanias and Agathon found the court of Archelaos a more hospitable venue for their kind of love.

Scenes of lovemaking or courtship between adult men in the record of Greek vase painting are uncommon, but they do exist. One form is

the orgy scene, such as we find in the work of the Nikosthenes Painter: one famous kylix (Berlin 1964.4 = Hubbard 2003, Fig. 14), dated to around 500 bce, shows long-bearded satyrs engaging in both oral and anal intercourse, something we never find in pederastic scenes. One satyr even prepares to rape a seated sphinx. Satyrs are of course fantastic projections of male libido unhinged from social restrictions, perhaps in virtue of their association with the god Dionysos (Keuls 1985, 360–9; Lissarrague 1990); their pointed ears and bushy horse tails characterize them as quasi-bestial. But they are also quasi-human.¹⁰ That this scene would appeal to an Athenian painter and buyer suggests that it did convey, if in a rather cartoonish way, a certain fantasy of complete sexual abandon with other men. Another class of vases on which we find such orgies involving fully human characters is on some black figure Tyrrhenian amphoras (particularly one in Montpellier = Hubbard 2003, Figs. 5a–b and another in Orvieto = Lear and Cantarella, Figs. 3.14A–B), where we see a crudely drawn scene of grotesquely ithyphallic men gathered around a wine bowl, some engaged in anal intercourse, including at least one coupling in which an unbearded youth penetrates a bearded man. These amphoras, found in Etruria, are thought by some to be of Etruscan rather than Athenian manufacture (Ginge 1988); others have supposed them, even if Athenian, to conform to an Etruscan taste for this form of homosexuality. One could also, however, interpret them as humorous or satirical. But satire always aims at some element of truth, implying that at least some drunken men did enjoy such acts, even if they did not always literally perform them bending over a wine bowl.

Another category of adult–adult contact is what we find in the work of one particular Athenian black figure painter known as “the Affecter.” Here we do not see wild parties, but a series of bearded men courting each other with exactly the same gestures and gifts that we find in the more common scenes of pederastic courtship (see London B153 = [Figure 8.8](#)). Some scholars (e.g. Shapiro 2000, 20–1) have attempted to explain this away as merely “talking with one’s hands.” In his recent study of pederastic conventions in vase iconography, Lear (Lear and Cantarella 2008, 68–71) despairs of finding any particular meaning or significance in the Affecter’s work, although he does suggest, very tentatively, that it may have been intended for an Etruscan market. It surely must indicate, like the Tyrrhenian ware, that there actually were some adult men, whether in Attica or Italy, who preferred other men rather than adolescent boys. The Affecter himself may have shared this preference, or he may have produced work to please one or more patrons who liked adult partners. Queer as they might be in the Athenian context, such men surely existed and

were the focus of at least one Athenian painter's study.

Figure 8.8 Black figure amphora by the Affecter. Bearded men court each other.

Source: London B153. © The Trustees of the British Museum.



It should be observed that, further to the left from the view of the scene shown here, the god Dionysos is portrayed giving a kantharos of wine to a bearded Ikarios, a figure of local Attic mythology who was supposedly the first man to whom Dionysos taught the art of fermenting grapes into wine. Interestingly, we find Dionysos' gift of wine to Ikarios the focus of another amphora by the Affecter, also in the British Museum (London B149), on which an ithyphallic satyr approaches to the left of Dionysos. Could these juxtapositions suggest that Dionysos' relationship to his acolyte Ikarios was also in some sense sexual? As with the wine bowl around which the men dance on the Tyrrhenian amphoras, the suggestion is that intoxication loosens inhibitions to the extent that grown men will become physically intimate with each other in the absence of women or boys. Hupperts (2005, 183–90) shows that wine-induced sex play between adult men is common on Boeotian black figure ware of the same period.

We find traces of this adult male sympotic sexual intimacy even in the work of mainstream red figure artists like Douris, although it is more implicit and coded: on a kylix (Kusnacht, Hirschmann Collection 44 = Buitron-Oliver 1995, no. 185) we see three pairs of courting

couples on each side, mainly age-equal youths. However, on the interior we see Dionysos reclining on a banqueting couch and holding a rhyton, accompanied by a man with a short-cropped beard in the position that would usually be occupied by a youth. That man looks directly at Dionysos as a lover would. Could this man be Ikarios or another beloved of Dionysos? That Dionysos appears as a partner to an adult man is again suggestive.

On the inside of another cup by Douris (London E54 = Buitron-Oliver 1995, no. 144), we have two very similar-looking men with long beards walking home: one man, holding a wine pitcher in one hand and a cup in the other, is obviously so inebriated as to barely stand upright, with narrow and unfocused eyes as if he is about to pass out, whereas his less inebriated partner, equipped with a walking stick, puts his arm around the man's shoulder, looks him in the face, and smiles. What codes this scene as erotic is the fact that both men's cloaks hang down loose around their sides, revealing full frontal nudity. Interestingly, we also find inscribed around the figures the phrase *ho pais kalos* ("the boy is beautiful"), as if to imply humorously that the inebriated man being helped home by his smiling partner is in some sense taking the place of a boy under the benign guidance of a lover.

Relations between adult men were even more often the object of allusion in Roman texts. Unlike most Greek states, Rome never idealized or even sanctioned homosexual relations with a freeborn youth, but generally condoned them with male slaves, who were in many cases boys, but in other cases were adults, like Cicero's freed slave Tiro (Pliny the Younger, *Epistles* 7.4.3–6). Seneca the Elder cites the orator Haterius defending a freedman by claiming that sexual service was a necessity for a slave and a "duty" for a freed slave, regardless of age. We have more than one story of Roman soldiers being approached by commanders for sexual favors (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities* 16.4; Valerius Maximus 6.1.12). The general (and short-lived Emperor) Galba was said to have preferred very masculine-looking soldiers as his sexual partners (Suetonius, *Galba* 22).

Other Roman texts speak of Roman men of high status who inverted social hierarchies by taking a sexually passive role with more virile (and not necessarily younger) men of low status. The Emperor Nero is alleged to have assumed the female role with the gladiator Doryphorus (Suetonius, *Nero* 29), and Elagabalus supposedly sought out the best endowed men he could find in brothels and public baths (Dio Cassius 80.13.1–80.17.1; SHA 8.6–7, 11.7–12.2). Seneca (*Natural Questions* 1.16) tells of one Hostius Quadra, who outfitted his bedroom with distorting mirrors to exaggerate the apparent genital size of the

men penetrating him in orgies. Plautus (*Curculio* 482–4), the mime-writer Pomponius Bononiensis (Frr. 148–9, 151–2 R), and Martial (2.51, 3.71, 6.50) all give evidence of male prostitutes who specialized in taking the active role with men who desired anal penetration; the pseudo-Virgilian *Catalepton* 13.23–6 suggests that sailors along the banks of the Tiber were available for the same purpose. Juvenal's Satire 9 presents the entertaining monologue of an aging prostitute who served his patron in just this way. One graffito from Pompeii (*CIL* 4.8483) appears to be an advertisement for such a prostitute, naming a price considerably higher than that claimed by others for service of a more passive nature. While most of these texts are satirical or defamatory in nature, they nevertheless suggest the reality of some men at Rome whose inclinations were decidedly androphile rather than pederastic. While the erotic aesthetics of Hellenic culture centered on the fragile but developing adolescent body, the militarism and machismo of Roman culture promoted a more muscular aesthetics of manliness and phallic power that led for some to the fetishization of the developed, mature male body.

Guide to Further Reading

The question of peer sexuality has been largely neglected in previous published literature, with the significant exception of Hupperts 1988, 2000, 2005, whose analysis of the iconographic evidence is thorough and convincing. Hubbard 2005 noted it briefly, with particular attention to athletes and trainers who appear little different in age. Davidson 2007 also believes that homosexuality did occur among adult men in ancient Greece, but his view that boys under 18 were off limits is based on faulty manipulation of evidence. For the iconographic evidence that suggests lesbian relations were usually between age-equals, see the valuable survey of Rabinowitz 2002. On subcultures of men having sex with men in ancient Rome, see Richlin 1993 and Taylor 1997.

Notes

¹ *Symposium* 2.3 also suggests that Kritoboulos' father arranged to have him married at a very young age.

² This must surely also be the point of a much misunderstood passage in Pausanias' speech in Plato's *Symposium* (183C–D), where

he refers to boys making fun of those who acquire an older lover.

3 Aeschines tells us in this paragraph that Misgolas was 45, the same age as Aeschines himself. However, Timarchos must also have been at least 45, since he served on the Athenian Council in 361 bce (Aeschines 1.109), where the minimum age for service was 30, and the present trial takes place in 346 bce, exactly 15 years later. See Harris 1988, Carey 2000, 41–2 n. 58, and Fisher 2001, 10–12.

4 One finds the shared cloak as a symbolic device in scenes suggesting intimacy between two women, such as the black figure pyxis, a triptych scene with pederasty on one side, heterosexuality on another, and lesbian intimacy on the third (Mississippi 1977.3.72 = Hubbard 2003, [Figure 8.4a](#)). For discussion and other examples, see Koch-Harnack 1989, 109–65, Rabinowitz 2002, 130–3.

5 For other scenes of this type involving pairs of youths in this painter's work, see Lezzi-Hafter 1988, nos. 11, 18–22, 24, 39, 42, 48, 80. That they imply erotic interest is confirmed by the similar composition of the figures on vases that feature youths and women conversing.

6 In addition to Foucault, cited above, see Davidson 2007, 86–8.

7 A possible exception is New York 06.1021.167 (= [Figure 5.5](#) in Rabinowitz 2002), where the interior of the kylix shows a schoolgirl holding a scroll-box being led by the hand by another woman, who turns around to speak to her as if to explain the importance of obtaining an education. That this is not merely a mother–daughter scene is suggested by the exterior sides of the cup, where we see pairs of women in animated conversation: some of them appear notably thinner than their partners and remain tightly wrapped in their robes (as is typical of shy boys in pederastic scenes), in contrast to the more expressive speaking partner who extends a hand either in the direction of their chin or pelvis. In New York 23.160.80 and London E461 ([Figures 5.3–5.4](#) in Rabinowitz 2002), we can note that one member of the pair is visibly thinner and/or shorter than the other, but we also observe that this is the partner wrapping her arms around her taller and more developed companion as they both watch a musician. So, even if this difference in stature codes an age difference, it does not mark a difference in passion or mutual devotion.

8 Nestor quotes Patroklos' father Menoitios telling him that, since he is older, he should “speak well to him a closely-set saying, set proposals before him, and point things out to him.” This is certainly not inconsistent with the kind of advice one might expect a pederastic lover to give a boy, but it could just as well be the advice

an older teen brother might give, on the basis of one or two years' more experience with the world. It need not indicate a substantial difference in age.

9 The scholion to Lucian (*Alexander* 4), which quotes this fragment, says the ruins of Kimon's house were a public toilet. The Theopompos fragment is delivered in the voice of Mt. Lycabettus: "In my neighborhood those who have too long been youths perform sexual favors for their age-mates." The phrase about those who are "too long youths" must refer to adult men who shave their beards (as Agathon did) to remain attractive to other adult men.

10 That satyr sexuality is not far from human is demonstrated graphically on a Boeotian bowl lid (Berlin V.1.3366) reproduced as Fig. 1 in Hupperts 2005, 183–4; it shows satyrs (with horse tails) and very similar-looking men (without horse tails) interacting sexually.

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Chapter 9

Female Homoeroticism

Sandra Boehringer

Introduction: Female Homosexuality Is a Heuristic Category

Modern terminology concerning sex and sexuality assumes that certain sexual practices are associated with the ancient world. Terms like “lesbianism” suggest that the ancients designated female homosexuality in this way and there were “lesbians” in Greece and Rome. But studies of the first appearance and semantic evolution of such words in Greek, Latin, and English have shown that the name of Sappho of Lesbos was associated with love between women only late (Lardinois 1989; Halperin 1998). The Greek word *Lesbiades* designated geographical origin without any association with contemporary female “homosexuals,” whereas the verb *lesbiazein* referred to various sexual acts performed with men, usually fellatio (Kroll 1924; Dover 1978; Jocelyn 1980; Gilhuly forthcoming).

It would seem anomalous to speak of “female homosexuality” when scholars of ancient sexuality have been emphasizing for more than twenty years that modern categories of sexuality do not match those of the ancient world (Foucault 1978; Halperin, Winkler, and Zeitlin 1990; Halperin 1990; Parker 2001; see Chapter 2 in this volume). The present chapter subscribes wholeheartedly to this line of thought. It will therefore not look back to the ancient world for a category that has existed for scarcely more than one hundred and twenty years. Our task is rather to determine, without preconceptions, the kinds of human activities among which the ancients classed

homoerotic practices between women. We shall find that the history of love and sexual relations between women is not that of a general conception of “homosexuality” and that it has its own specific characteristics and diachronic development.

Greece: Passionate Eros or Indifference

Before Sappho, there was Alcman. The first documents expressing homoerotic sentiments between women come from Sparta and were produced in the seventh century bce. They consist of *partheneia*, poems to be sung by girls being trained for choral performances (Calame 1983). In all probability, the author, Alcman, was commissioned by the city of Sparta to compose these works for public performance by a female chorus. Alcman has the girls sing verses celebrating the grace (*charis*) of their choral leader, a young woman who inspires them with modesty, admiration, and at the same time erotic emotion (Calame 1997; *contra* Stehle 1997, who sees no homoerotic sentiment here). This emotion is described in terms of its physical effects; the girls describe the impact left on their bodies by a force, eros, that leaves them staggering

by limb-loosening desire.
She looks at me more meltingly
Than sleep or death;
She is sweet in no way ineffectually.
But Astymeloisa does not answer me at all,
When she has the crown,
Just like a brilliant star falling through the sky
Or a golden bough or soft feather ...
She advanced with striding feet ...
The moist allure of Cinyras
Sits upon her maidenly hair ...
Ah! If she should come closer and take
My tender hand, I would become hers.

(Alcman Fr. 26.61–72, 80–1 Calame)

In another fragment (Alcman Fr. 3.1–39 Calame), a eulogy of Agido and Hagesichora is preceded by the evocation of heroic figures connected with the mythical past of Sparta; this underlines the civic nature of these choral performances. The homoerotic *élan* does not arise from quiet personal sentiments guarded secretly within a deeply

intimate relationship; these are sentiments fit to be sung in public and capable of creating a collective bond.

If music had a major role in the *paideia* ordained by the city in Sparta, it was equally important in the life of the community in Lesbos, the island where the famous poet Sappho lived in the later seventh and early sixth century bce. We know very little about the circumstances in which Sappho's poems were performed (Greene 1996), and they have often been subjected to anachronistic visions casting Sappho as a schoolmistress, a priestess, or even a jealous, aging lover (see Parker 1993 for a critical discussion of these interpretations). Several studies concern the voice delivering the poem, its genre, and whether it expresses homoerotic feelings (Hallett 1979; Greene 1996); a pragmatic approach to Sappho's work—an approach that takes into account the concrete performance of the songs as indicated by verbal clues (e.g., Calame 1999, Yatromanolakis 2007)—emphasizes the musical and collective character of the poems, which clearly celebrate eros between women.

My heart flutters in my breast,
Whenever I look quickly, for a moment—
I say nothing, my tongue broken,
A delicate fire runs under my skin,
My eyes see nothing, my ears roar,
Cold sweat rushes down me,
Trembling seizes me,
I am greener than grass,
To myself I seem
To be very close to death.

(Fr. 31, 5–12, trans. Hubbard 2003, adapted)

In Sappho's poems, “bittersweet” eros is a crippling force that carries off everything in its path. The terms for physical desire (*himeros*, *pothos*) are unambiguous (Winkler 1990, Snyder 1997), and when the poet sings of the troubling appearance of the young Atthis (Fr. 49), the beauty of Gongyla (Fr. 22), the departure of a tenderly loved woman (Fr. 96), or the bright memory of past embraces (Fr. 94), what she elicits is the impact of eros on the body of the lover: “and on a soft, gentle bed, in my arms, you tenderly quenched your desire” (Fr. 94).

Considering how few sources have survived from that time, it seems likely that Sappho was not the only female poet to celebrate such love, and that the love itself was not something unusual or rare. Anacreon, a male poet, in a fictional, ludic epigram (Fr. 358), tells of a young woman who refused his advances in favor of a woman (this poem has occasioned opposite interpretations; see the synthesis in

Marcovich 1983). Notice also that, in Alcman's poem as well as in Sappho's, there is no indication and no hint of abnormality, fear or inhibition. In other poets of the archaic period, for instance Alcaeus, Anacreon, or Pindar, one finds very similar depictions of erotic symptoms in connection with relations between a man and a woman or a young man. This applies also to a polychrome plate from Thera of the seventh century bce (see [Figure 9.1](#)) showing two women face to face, exchanging garlands: one woman touches the chin of the other—a readily identifiable erotic motif (Dover 1978; Rabinowitz 2002). In the archaic period, female homoeroticism, far from being regarded as different from other erotic emotions, was suited for public art and performances.

Figure 9.1 Plate from Thera, c. 625 bce.

Source: © Hellenic Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, Culture and Sports/21st Ephorate of Antiquities.



The asymmetrical model of pederasty and its vital presence in

documents regarding the education and training of male citizens (see Chapter 7) have led classicists to look for traces of initiatory homosexuality among women as well (Bremmer 1980; Sergent 1996). At the very beginning of the second century ce, Plutarch, in his description of archaic Sparta (*Life of Lycurgus* 17.8–9), stresses the importance of the educative model represented by the lover for the beloved and draws a parallel with the relationship between noble women and girls (*kalai kai agathai*). Opinion is divided concerning how much credit should be given to this text, at least as a generalization; however, the text does attest to Plutarch's interest, at this period, in the social and political effects of erotic relations. In any case, even if the debate over the “initiation” question remains unresolved, our surviving sources are neither sufficiently clear nor sufficiently numerous to allow us to conclude that the social model of love between women was asymmetrical.

Turning to mythology, even if there is no female equivalent to the myths about love affairs between a god and a mortal youth (e.g., Apollo and Hyacinth; see Sergent 1996), there is a motif in the story of Kallisto, who, according to the tradition, was changed into a bear and then into a constellation: One variant, attested by scholia to Hesiod and Aratos, has Zeus metamorphosing into Artemis in order to embrace this girl, who was the favorite companion of Artemis (Calame 1997, Sergent 1996). This variant also appears in sources from the Roman period.

During the classical and Hellenistic periods, when male pederasty was so common in painting and in philosophical and poetic texts and when sexual relations between males were broadly depicted in comedy (see Chapters 8 and 22), works that mention the possibility of erotic relations between females are extremely rare. The only—but major—exception in the classical period is the philosopher Plato. In the *Symposium*, Aristophanes is represented telling a fantastical story in which the division of three primal entities led to the erotic types of his own time. Of contemporary humans, he states:

Each of us is a mere fragment of a human being ...we've been split into two, like filleted plaice ...women who are part of a primal woman pay very little attention to men. Their interest is in women; *hetairistria*i are found in this class. (Pl. *Smp.* 191D–E, trans. Hubbard 2003, adapted)

The word *hetairistria*, from the verb *hetairizein*, meaning either “to be the companion of” or “to be a prostitute,” appears here for the first time. In reality, there was no word for female homosexuals in Plato's day; and the term *hetairistria* does not appear again until its scholarly, ludic revival by Lucian five centuries later (see below). In the

structure of the *Symposium*, the erotic division proposed by Aristophanes prepares for the ideas of Socrates, who, as the mouthpiece of Diotima, demonstrates that eros is a drive toward the pure Form of the Beautiful; whatever its object, eros is the same for everyone, regardless of gender.

Some years later, Plato once again treats love between women on the same level as other passions—this time in a discussion of prohibitions on sexual behavior. In the *Laws*, the Athenian proposes to forbid love affairs of young people “with boys or girls,” in order to control their behavior during public gatherings, feasts, and sacrifices and to promote harmony and planned reproduction (836A–B; see also 636B–D). We should not read into this some kind of “homophobia”: affairs between men and women outside of marriage are also prohibited. Paradoxically, this general prohibition attests to Plato's recognition of erotic relations between women: such love is a passion that can lead to the same problems as other kinds of love. The evidence from Plato is very important.

I turn next to iconography. There are vases from the classical and Hellenistic periods showing women in an intimate atmosphere (Petersen 1997; Rabinowitz 2002), which raise questions about the intended viewer. Where explicit sexuality is concerned, however, there is a small number of vases on which specialists have different views (Kilmer 1993). Some believe that the vases showing women with *olisboi* (dildos) in their hands represent homosexual scenes. However, analysis of the scenes as a group reveals unambiguously that the dildo is not the mark of a lesbian (Rabinowitz 2002), since it often appears in the context of group sex with men. We must therefore conclude that, contrary to what one might think, female homosexuality is *not* a pornographic motif (in the modern sense of the term). Looking at two women making love to each other was not an erotic experience for the male users of these vessels, who preferred to see men with women or boys.

Moving on to literary evidence from the third and second centuries bce, we now find relations between women used as a theme in ludic and humorous discourse. An epigram by Asclepiades preserved in the *Palatine Anthology* (AP 5.207) presents a male poet as offended because two women have scorned him and left together. Cameron (1995) believes that there is an allusion to homoeroticism, but that it is intended as a calumny by the humiliated poet. Dover (2002) sees the two women as a couple. There is also the evidence of a comedy (of which only the argument survives) by the poet Amphis (Fr. 46 *PCG*), which showed Artemis disturbed upon seeing her favourite nymph, Kallisto, pregnant by Zeus but blaming the goddess for this pregnancy (Boehringer 2009).

In conclusion, as regards the classical and Hellenistic periods, given the small number and elusive nature of the sources, it is important not to overindulge in interpretation. All we can affirm is that one finds neither taboo, satire, or rejection nor moral condemnation of female homoeroticism per se. One of the possible manifestations of the boundless and multiform eros celebrated by the archaic poets no longer has a voice in the realm of public discourse.

Rome and Graeco-Roman Culture: Satire, Rejection and Humor

Roman references to female homosexuality must be understood within a system of representations and moral values that are different from those of Greece (see Chapter 2 in this volume). For example, in the Roman world, pederasty (in the sense of relationships between an adult citizen and a future citizen) is morally condemned in practice, but an imaginary erotic pederasty appears in the context of very complex references to Greece—a Greece that Rome invented and constructed as a model of “the other” and simultaneously as an integral part of its own identity (Dupont and Eloi 2001). I believe that references to Greece in Roman representations of sexual relations between women are generated by this relationship. (These references are listed by Hallett 1989, but she interprets them differently.)

The first references to love between women in Rome are made in connection with the poet Sappho. In the *Heroides*, a collection of fictional letters exchanged between heroines and their lovers, Ovid gives expression to a Sappho in love with a young man, Phaon, who leaves her (Gordon 1997). The persona of Sappho recalls her past loves in Lesbos: Anaktoria, Kydro, Atthis, and “a hundred other women whom I loved” (Ov. *Her.* 15, 15–20). Certainly Ovid's Sappho is in love with a man; but note that Ovid evokes her love of women non-judgmentally and that he makes Sappho his own poetic model as a writer of love and desire.

Ovid turns his attention to love between women in two other passages, both in the *Metamorphoses*. After a description of bodies in the process of changing gender, he tells the story of Kallisto and Jupiter's transformation into Diana to embrace her (*Met.* 4.428 ff.). Ovid also reports the Cretan legend of Iphis. This is the longest passage in Latin literature devoted to female homoerotic relations

(Pintabone 2002, Ormand 2005, Walker 2006, Boehringer 2007, Kamen 2012). When Iphis was born a girl, her mother told everyone that she was a boy, so that the father would not expose the baby. Her hoax worked until the day when Iphis met the beautiful girl Ianthe: “She, a woman, is inflamed for a woman” (*Met.* 9.725). At the end of the tale, Iphis is changed into a man through the intervention of the goddess Isis. However, although the initial contrivance is a simple *quid pro quo* based on cross-dressing (Iphis is a girl dressed like a boy, and Ianthe thinks she is a boy), Ovid will not stop bending the logic of the story. He shows how much Iphis resembles a girl in spite of the circumstances and in spite of her own rearing; and her lengthy, desperate monologue (essentially she says “even animals don't do that”) is riddled with rhetorical clichés prompting the reader's expectation of the real metamorphosis that follows: “Will Daedalus use his skills to change me from a girl to a boy, or will he change you instead?” (*Met.* 9.743–4). Insofar as the desired change could affect either one or the other, it is a *correlation* (in the mathematical sense) that must be changed, not a person. This is what gives full meaning to the way in which the final situation is expressed: *potiturque sua puer Iphis Ianthe*, “and the young man Iphis possesses his Ianthe” (*Met.* 9.789)—an action that presupposes the presence of a *vis*, a capability that was previously absent. Indeed that is the essential alteration undergone by Iphis in her/his metamorphosis. Ovid gives us very little information concerning the other symptoms (as a man, he has a stronger complexion and shorter hair). The gender change here is a *means*, not an end, the first step in a different kind of metamorphosis: one that changes *what binds* Iphis to Ianthe from a *cura prodigiosa* to *venus de more*. We should not see “homophobia” here. Relations between gods and young men are treated very differently in Ovid (e.g., Apollo's love for Hyacinth, or Zeus' desire for Ganymede are unambiguously expressed, without being disparaged), and we must bear in mind the distance between the point of view of the self-hating Iphis and that of the poet, who is describing the development of mutual love between two young women. We must remember that the *Metamorphoses* is not an ethical treatise, but a narration of the successive metamorphoses that led from chaos to the world of Augustus—a world that did not allow any *social* role for this kind of relationship.

A graffito found on the wall of a house in Pompeii (*CIL* 4.5296) takes up the motif of the *paraklausithuron* (the desperate love song of a lover locked out in front of the door of his beloved), which is touched upon by Ovid in Iphis' lamentations. K. Milnor, breaking with a long line of interpretations that obliterate the question of gender, has shown that the writer is a woman addressing another woman as “my

darling” (*pupula*; Milnor 1998). These few verses, discovered in 1888, confirm the possibility, in Rome at the end of the first century bce or the beginning of the first century ce, of romantic discourse in the genre of elegiac poetry and in the broader medium of graffiti.

At the beginning of the first century ce a very different discourse commences; it is explicitly disparaging and far from the realm of love poetry. The Latin term *tribas* appears for the first time, a noun formed from the root of the Greek verb *tribein*, meaning “to rub” (compare the relation between French *frotter* and English “frottage”). (It is important to note that the corresponding Greek word *tribas* is not attested until the second century ce, in astrological texts—although another Greek derivative, *tribē*, basically “rubbing” but much more, is a very common and ancient word, attested as early as Aeschylus, but never in contexts associated with female homoeroticism.) The Roman fabulist Phaedrus resorts to this term in a fable ascribing the origin of *tribades* and *molles mares* (literally “soft men”) to a mistake made by Prometheus, who, being drunk, wrongly assembled the bodily parts of his models for creating humankind (Book 4, Fable 16; see Williams 1999; Boehringer 2007). The change of these women's gender explains their deviant pleasures (*pravo gaudio*). For a long time, this aetiological fable was used to support the view that the Romans had a conception of “lesbians” as physically masculine women pursuing feminine women, and *tribas* would designate this active partner. However, at about the same time, Seneca the Elder, in a fictional *controversia* for training future orators, cites two Greek orators who had the poor taste to propose the case of a husband who surprises his wife in bed with another woman and kills the intruder (*Controv.* 1.2.23). The issue is whether or not the man had the right to kill this woman. The text is corrupt and its interpretation is complicated (Dalla 1987, Cantarella 1988, and Richlin 1992 all have different views on it); but one thing is certain. The fact that the orators could not have recourse to a *causa legitima* to defend the husband shows that Rome had no laws concerning adultery between women. Note, too, that Seneca the Elder, a Latin author, uses the Greek (accusative) plural *tribadas* and applies it to both women.

Martial, in his satirical epigrams, refers to sexual practices between women in connection with two characters. His poems are extremely crude, but not more so than those that poke fun, with obscene details, at fellators, cunnilinctors, cinaedi and all the hypocrites of his day. “Philaenis the tribad,” after sodomizing young boys, performs various athletic exercises, and then:

When she's feeling sexy,
She doesn't give blowjobs (she thinks this isn't macho enough),

But she just eats the middles of girls.
May the gods give you back your brain, Philaenis,
If you think it's macho to lick cunt.

(Martial 7.67.13–17, trans. Hubbard 2003)

Philaenis is “the tribad of tribads” (7.70.1); she indulges excessively in actions that she believes to be manly. Her portrayal has often been highlighted in modern interpretations as incarnating the stereotype of a female homosexual: masculine, active, and oversexed. But the target of Martial's humor is her mistaken judgment. Roman masculinity is restrained, it does not spring from a specific sexual activity—especially cunnilingus!—it is social and ethical.

Martial's portrayal of Bassa is rather different. She appears to be a very chaste matron and goes out only with women:

But you, disgraceful to say, were fucking women.
You dare to bring twin cunts together
And your monstrous union [*prodigiosa venus*] counterfeits a man.
You have invented a freak worthy of the Theban riddle:
That here, where no man is, there can be adultery.

(Martial 1.90, trans. Hubbard 2003, adapted)

The comic effect is in the paradox of the final point, but also in the surprise created by this character: nothing in her physical appearance hints at her sexual activities. Bassa is neither athletic nor masculine; it is her behavior that is targeted by Martial.

These epigrams have occasioned a recurrent view that Martial assumed that Bassa or Philaenis used a dildo or had an abnormally large clitoris. But the ancient medical texts relating to genital malformations or to clitoridectomy never connect this pathology with “homosexual” behaviour. The first medical text to mention sexual relations between women dates from the fifth century ce and does not refer to any physical malformation (Caelius Aurelianus, *Chronic Diseases*, 4.9.132–3). This passage has given rise to intense scientific discussions (Brooten 1996 and 1998; Halperin 1997 and 1998) on the danger of perceiving “homosexuality” as a category in medical or “parascientific” texts. The astrological texts (Ptolemy, Vettius Valens, Manetho) do mention the birth of *tribades* and *cinaedi* under a particular constellation (Brooten 1996), but, as Halperin (1998) points out, the case of men and that of women are never discussed together, their deviance is manifested also in their social behavior, and the prediction does not apply to both partners. Note also that the meaning of *tribas* and *fricatrix* (a Latin calque on the Greek *tribas*, which occurs in Hermes Trismegistus in the fourth century) varies according to context. The same variation is observed in other contexts, where the

term *tribas* is not used. In his *Interpretation of Dreams*, Artemidorus of Ephesus mentions the possibility of dreams in which a woman dreams that she is penetrating a woman or being penetrated by her. The dream is classified under relations “against nature” (*para phusin*; Foucault 1986, ch. 1), but the prediction is positive if the women know each other. In a fourth-century treatise of physiognomy (Anonymus Latinus 85—edited by Ian Repath), women attracted to other women are said to be “of feminine type.”

Actually, throughout the Roman Empire, there was no coherent image of a manly “lesbian” who used a dildo or had an enlarged clitoris, and the characters appearing in novels or satire in the first and second centuries had different personalities and demeanors. Thus Petronius’ allusion to a kiss between two women (Fortunata and Scintilla, both wives of freedmen, without any distinctive traits) shows only that this action had no social implication in the world of the *Satiricon* (67); the satirist Juvenal’s mockery when he describes Maura and Tullia, drunk, “straddling each other in turn in the moonlight” (*Satires* 6.306–13) before finding their husbands illustrates the general decadence of morals in the new Rome, corrupted as it was by money and foreign influences. The real common feature of these representations, from the fable writer Phaedrus to the satirist Juvenal, is the disparaging tone. Drunk or excessive, sometimes (but not always) masculine, these women are reprehensible—they present a negative image. At the same time, the rarity of representations of female homoeroticism in erotic visual images and paintings (the only image currently known is a badly damaged mural found in the suburban baths of Pompeii—see Cantarella 1998) confirms that female homoeroticism did not fall within the scope of the erotic imagination and fantasies of the male elite in any positive way.

These fluctuating and mutually inconsistent images are deliberately and cleverly assembled in a work that has a very different tone: the *Dialogues of the Courtesans*, written by Lucian of Samosata, the master of allusion, erudition, and humor (second century ce). In Dialogue 5 he represents a courtesan, Leaina, telling her companion Klonarion about her evening with Megilla of Lesbos and Demonassa of Corinth. Initially present as a kithara player, she becomes the guest of this “married” female couple as the two invite her to stay overnight (on their “marriage,” see Cameron 1998 and Boehringer 2007). “At first they kissed me like men, not simply bringing their lips to mine, but opening their mouths a little, embracing me, and squeezing my breasts. Demonassa even bit me as she kissed” (trans. Hubbard 2003). In the middle of their embraces they open a dialogue on the gender identity of Megilla. She shows her shaved head (previously hidden under a wig) and demands to be called Megillus, but asserts that she is

neither a man in women's clothing (like the young Achilles in myth) nor a hermaphrodite, nor the product of a sex change like Teiresias: "I was born like you other women, but my mind, my desires, and everything else are the same as those of a man." Current commentaries on this dialogue have focused mainly on the character of Megilla (Gilhuly 2006), while others have seen here a manly lesbian with a dildo, a veritable butch, and concluded that she is a *tribas*, sometimes claiming that she is the image of a female homosexual in the representations of the ancients (among other—and not necessarily relevant—reasons, because she is a prostitute). But none of this is so clear in the dialogue: if Megilla uses a dildo to penetrate Leaina to be "manly" and a pleasure-giver, how come she indulges herself in orgasm while "doing" (*epoiei*) her? If Megilla is the lesbian in an active-and-passive couple, what can we say about Demonassa, who bites Leaina? Is she not also a participant in this sexual activity? As for Leaina, should we believe her when she tells her friend that she had to be begged, when she embraces Megilla tightly? In addition, there is no reason to believe that Megilla and Demonassa are prostitutes. Attention to the structure of the dialogue shows, however, that we should not take Lucian literally; the inset dialogue turns out to be a *mise en abyme*, in which Leaina (like Lucian) invents a dialogue to please her audience and then inserts *topoi*, winks, and logical impossibilities. Echoes of Plato are numerous, making this women's *sumposion* a metadiscourse. Far from gaining access to the representations and realities of Lucian's audience in the imperial period, we are faced with a learned elaboration of what an orator and sophist must do to please and keep his audience: he must invent a world full of astonishing paradoxes, where the characters are neither male nor female, but simply of an *allokotos* gender (Luc. *Dial. meret.* 5.67), like the new *genre* invented by Lucian (Boehringer forthcoming).

The use of a similar structure for sophistic elaboration may be found in another dialogue by Lucian. The *Amores* (*Erotes*), again within a dialogue frame, represents a rhetorical contest in demonstrating which kind of erotic passion—for boys or for women—is superior (Charikles defends the love of women and Kallikratidas that of boys). M. Foucault (1985) studied this text at length, showing that this school exercise demonstrates the non-existence of the modern categories of homosexuality and heterosexuality in the ancient world. There is no essential difference here between preferring women or boys that would change the inner identity of an individual: the whole question is one of "taste" (Halperin 1992), and Theomnestos, who asks Lykinos for his opinion on the matter, openly admits that he cannot make a definitive choice. In this comparison between the merits of

women and those of boys, the point of view is always that of the free man. Love between women is never mentioned as a possible taste to defend, either by the advocate of the love of women or by the respondent who defends men's love for boys.

If there is any mention of female homoeroticism, it is at a very particular moment in the contest between the two orators. In the conclusion of his speech, where he aims at winning a definitive victory, the defender of the love between women draws a frightening picture of a world in which relations between men are accepted and women would be allowed to make love with one another:

Let them strap to themselves cunningly contrived instruments of lechery, those mysterious monstrosities devoid of seed, and let woman lie with woman as does a man. Let wanton Tribadism—that word seldom heard, which I feel ashamed even to utter—freely parade itself, and let our women's chambers emulate Philaenis, disgracing themselves with androgynous amours. (Luc. *Am.* 28, trans. Hubbard 2003, adapted)

The clichés of excess and sexual role reversal are here again, as well as explicit reference to a dildo and to another “Philaenis,” which, apart from her appearance in Martial, is also the name of the author of a sex manual (P. Oxy. 2891). But what is the actual argument? Essentially Charikles says that, if relations between males are recognized, then we must also recognize relations between females. The implicit premise behind this proposition is the following: Relations between males and relations between females belong to a common category, namely relations between members of the same sex, that is, “homosexuality.” This, then, is the worst threat that can be used to denigrate the love of boys! But the very idea of such a category is treated as absolutely preposterous, and the opponent, Kallikratidas, will win the contest. Female homosexuality is used here in the service of an argument that has nothing to do with women having sex with women. What this tells us is that female homosexuality is beyond the scope of poems or dialogues elaborating the motif of comparative erotics; it is not relevant to such concerns.

Finally, let us consider some less sophisticated documents written in a different context: magic spells from the Hellenized Egypt. To produce such spells, a client would meet with a magician and ask him, in return for payment, to write a magic formula destined to cast a spell on a desired object. The ritual took place near a cemetery. The papyrus or tablet was thrown into the tomb of the dead person being invoked, while the magician stuck pins into a statue or doll corresponding to the bodily parts mentioned (see Chapter 17 in this volume). A lead tablet from the third or fourth century ce found at

Hermoupolis bears a long inscription, part of which reads:

By means of this corpse-demon inflame the heart, the liver, and the spirit of Gorgonia, whom Nilogenia bore, with love and affection for Sophia, whom Isara bore ... Drive Gorgonia, whom Nilogenia bore, drive her, torment her body night and day, force her to rush forth from every place and every house, loving Sophia, whom Isara bore, she, surrendered like a slave, giving herself and all her possessions to her, because this is the will and command of the great god. (*PSI* 1.28.12–19, trans. from Hubbard 2003)

A second-century ce papyrus found at Hawara contains a spell to bind two women, Sarapias and Herais (*PGM* 32). According to J. Winkler's (1990) analysis, the suffering dispatched to the beloved is a projection of the pain experienced each day by the person in love. The corpus of magical papyri reveals that, just as in the archaic period, this eros which causes such suffering is expressed in the same terms whether the spell involves two women, two men, or a man and a woman.

We cannot trace here a linear development between imperial satire and third- and fourth-century magic in Egypt on the question of female homoeroticism. Let us simply state that there are different discursive activities and that it is chiefly in prescriptive sources like Martial's moralizing epigrams or Juvenal's satires that women who love women are presented as engaging in deviant behavior.

Our sources do not directly reflect reality. This is a difficulty in research on ancient sexuality. The sources are part of a complex system of representations. When women are portrayed with women, this is because such portrayals and allusions serve specific strategies, peculiar to each author and each type of discourse, which have to be deciphered. This interpreting can be difficult and may sometimes seem to divert us from our initial question; but, insofar as we know that the heuristic categories with which we approach the ancient world are destined to dissolve as the ancient categories appear, we *must* expect to arrive in regions where we did not expect to go.

Conclusion: Female Homoeroticism Reveals Ancient Gender Systems

The discourse on female homosexuality manifests an essential aspect

of ancient societies, namely their asymmetrical gender system. In the ancient world, there was no perceived equivalence of the love between men and the love between women. Similarly, when we study prescriptive or moralizing discourse, the image of the *tribas* is not the counterpart of the figure of the *kinaidos* or the *euruprōktos* (see Chapter 2 in this volume). At Rome, while the *cinaedus* or the *mollis* can, in certain circumstances, typify a deviant masculinity, the *tribas*, a Roman invention, does not fulfill a similar *role* vis-à-vis a “female” or an ideal image of a woman.

This configuration reveals a system of complex polarities *within* the ancient social concept of masculinity. Men's and women's positions at every moment of their life, and distinctions and antitheses between individuals depended on multiple and fluctuating gradations and criteria (social position, provenance, fortune, activity, comportment, behavior, and modalities of these social and erotic features). All women? No, it seems that, when a woman loved a woman, she was irrelevant, and such women evolved in an area that was seldom explored by ancient norms and imagination. The plain male/female binary is a modern idea and the prehistory of female homosexuality both require us to pose specific questions for each period and every context of discourse. In this world “before sexuality,” if we are prepared to abandon our preconceptions, the investigation will lead us into *terra incognita*. The journey has only begun.

Guide to Further Reading

At the present time there are few monographs devoted entirely to the question of female homoeroticism in antiquity. Brooten 1996 studies the early Christian sources, including some material on Greek and Roman culture. Boehringer 2007 offers a global survey of the sources on female homosexuality in the (non-Christian) ancient world. Note also Snyder 2007, which is devoted entirely to “lesbian desire” in Sappho. Female homoeroticism is sometimes treated more generally in longer books on sexuality, male homosexuality, sex and love in Greece and Rome, or the works of Sappho and Alcman (Calame 1983; Calame 1999).

Works published in the late 1990s and early 2000s on gender, sexuality, women, or eroticism that include contributions on various texts regarding female homosexuality are Hallett and Skinner 1997; Lardinois and McClure 2001; Rabinowitz and Auanger 2002 (with the contributions of Auanger 2002 and Pintabone 2002); Nussbaum and Sihvola 2002 (which reprints Halperin 1998); Faraone and McClure

2006; and, still to come, Blondell and Ormand, with two contributions on this question.

Finally, recent general studies of ancient sexuality have made this subject more visible: such are the sourcebooks of Hubbard 2003 and Boehringer and Tin 2010, and the books by Skinner 2005 and Ormand 2008.

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Chapter 10

From Asceticism to Sexual Renunciation

Thomas K. Hubbard and Maria Doerfler

Introduction

Foucault's influential *History of Sexuality* attributed the origin of sexual asceticism to a range of voluntary protocols of self-control he identified in prose texts of the fourth century bce and later. As is well known, he largely neglected poetic texts and minimized the role of traditional religious or cultic prescriptions. As readers of Volume 1 are aware, part of Foucault's overall program was to challenge the widespread misperception that enforcement of institutionalized systems of sexual proscription, such as those offered by Christian doctrine in the early modern period, were primarily responsible for discursive formulations and the disciplining of personal behavior. Instead he sought to dissect a plurality of intellectual claims to disciplinary authority based on individually elected stylizations and practices of the self. Among the classical Greeks, he found these in those fourth-century prose texts that he deemed "practical."

The domain I will be analyzing is made up of texts written for the purpose of offering rules, opinions, and advice on how to behave as one should: "practical" texts, which are themselves objects of a "practice" in that they were designed to be read, learned, reflected upon, and tested out, and they were intended to constitute the eventual framework of everyday conduct. (Foucault 1986, 12)

One might question whether Plato or Xenophon regarded their literary works as "practical" or as a "framework of everyday conduct," and even more whether these texts really influenced more than a rather elite group of literate readers or reflected common social norms

in their time. I would argue that we are better able to locate practical illustrations of the differing modes of stylized practices of the self in the more realistic genres of comedy and tragedy; these were certainly far more deeply embedded within Athens' contemporary systems of civic values than the comparatively esoteric prose writings with which Foucault is concerned. The dramatic genres in turn, performed at civic festivals of Dionysos, express themselves through plots permeated by myth and ritual, the twin faces of Greek religion. A more intensive investigation of the religious basis for voluntary practices of ascesis, and even for complete sexual renunciation, is thus in order, particularly in view of the explicitly religious motivation for these practices in early Christianity and late antiquity, which we shall explore in the later part of this chapter.

A second strand of inquiry we shall pursue is to determine whether some individuals may have adopted a regimen of sexual abstinence not out of fidelity to an ideological or religious conception, but due to a personal inclination toward asexuality. Could religious or ideological grounds for non-participation in the normative structures of family life have been secondary for these individuals, a social and intellectual rationalization to justify their inherent distaste for sexuality? The Euripidean Hippolytos, to whom we shall return later in this chapter, exhibits an abstinence from desire so complete as to constitute, at least in his own mind, an essential asexual identity. As Hippolytos proclaims in his first speech of the play (ll. 79–80), the untouched meadow of purity is accessible only to those who have been taught nothing, but who have won the lot of having “temperance” (*sōphrosunē*) “in their nature” (*en tēi phusei*). Of course, Foucauldians have always denied that the ancients had any concept of an inborn sexual identity, but if asexuality existed as an identity category in classical Greece, as Hippolytos here suggests, sexuality must also have existed. In recent years, activists like the San Francisco-based David Jay and the Asexuality Visibility and Education Network (AVEN) have called attention to asexuality as an orientation rather than a choice for some individuals; demographic studies, including a random sampling of nearly 19,000 adults in the UK, suggest that about 1 percent of the population identifies itself as “having never felt sexually attracted to anyone at all” (Bogaert 2004). To the extent that absence of sexual interest may be related to hormonal, genetic, or other physiological causes, we may wonder whether a certain proportion of any historical population would have harbored a similar condition, even if its ideological, religious, or psychological dimensions are constructed differently in every culture.

Three Asexual Goddesses

It is worth noting in this context that the Graeco-Roman pantheon included no fewer than three divinities, all female, who are permanently and essentially asexual: Artemis, Hestia, and Athena. Since the Olympian gods are all too human in virtually every other aspect of their character, one must wonder why sexless females constitute so significant a proportion if the phenomenon of the never mated woman were non-existent in the human world. That the historical record tells us little or nothing about such women is not surprising: it tells us little about individual women generally, except insofar as they appear as mothers or wives of historically prominent men.² Never married sisters surely existed, especially in families that were too poor to provide an adequate dowry, but they would hardly be a source of pride to their guardians such that their privacy would be disturbed by any public exposure.³

In the trio of virgin goddesses, each one represents a different form of asexuality: age-determined for the perpetually adolescent Artemis, gender-queer for the masculinized Athena, and associated with the inalienable immobility of the paternal household in the case of Hestia, goddess of the hearth. The oldest of the three, Hestia comes closest to the role of the never married sister who stays at home to care for aging parents and then passes into the guardianship of her oldest brother. Center of the domestic architecture, she can never be exchanged with another family or moved into a husband's new home, as Vernant (1983, 127–75) emphasizes. In tragedy she finds her counterpart in the sterile Electra, perpetual rememberer of her father's claims, which she impresses upon her brother; even when Euripides has her married to a peasant, theirs is a sexless marriage due to her fixation on maintaining the proper order of succession in the paternal *oikos*.⁴

Artemis' perpetual adolescent liminality forms the counterpart to her brother Apollo's status as the eternal ephebe; although Apollo is not a virgin, his liminal position complicates his ability to consummate heterosexual unions (Hubbard 2009). As goddess of the hunt, Artemis oversees a sphere of activity that is frequently associated with adolescent initiation and, like all initiatory domains, imposes strict segregation of the sexes: all male in the everyday human world, in Artemis' myths the hunting band is inverted to become exclusively female, punishing male intruders (Actaion) or huntresses who allow themselves to be contaminated by contact with the male (Kallisto). In an elegant structuralist analysis, Detienne (1979, 26–52) shows the complementarity of the huntress Atalanta, who flees marriage and even hunts down her suitors, with the Black

Hunter Melanion, who chose wilderness and solitude out of his hatred of women; when fate brings them together into illicit sexual congress, they turn into lions, notoriously infertile animals who hunt other animals. For Detienne, the hunter's wild domain is a place of refuge from the tame domestication of the city and its sexual institutions of marriage and family. Adonis, the boy who is all too dominated by the feminine allure of Aphrodite, fails at the hunt and becomes prey rather than hunter. Within this mythological context, Hippolytos, chaste devotee of Artemis, is fully at home, an eternal ephebe who resists any contact with the world of Aphrodite.

Athena's asexuality has several dimensions: born in full armor from the head of Zeus, a super-virile father, without ever coming into contact with a mother's womb, Athena cuts a uniquely masculine figure among the goddesses of the Greek pantheon. Indeed, in Aeschylus' *Eumenides* 736–40, she asserts that her lack of a mother makes her always a partisan of the male (except in matters of marriage), thereby justifying her vote that Agamemnon's murder was a more serious crime than Klytaimnestra's. But even more fundamentally, Athena's role as defender of the city, presiding from her temple on the acropolis, casts her impregnable virginity as a symbol of the city's inviolability. Even despite her alliance with the Greeks, Troy can only be taken once her image, the Palladium, has been removed from its citadel; nevertheless, the sexual violation of Cassandra in her deserted precinct still draws her wrath against Aias son of Oileus. Just as Hestia's virginity represents the continuity of domestic space, Athena's virginity insures the intact survival of the political realm.

Perhaps the closest human analogue to Athena's virginity in defense of the city's interests is the Aristophanic Lysistrata, generally thought to be modelled on Lysimache, the priestess of Athena Polias for 64 years (Plin. *HN* 34.76; see Lewis 1955). Intent on saving her city from the destructive effects of continued war, Lysistrata persuades the women of both Athens and Sparta to renounce sex as a strategy to manipulate their husbands into making peace. While Aristophanes' comedy shows this temporary renunciation to be a struggle for most women, we have no sense that it occasions Lysistrata herself the slightest difficulty. Indeed we never hear that she even has a husband; her cool resolve and unemotional, even humorless sobriety suggest the very image of Athena herself (for whose prominence in the play, see Anderson 1995: 39–55). It does not surprise that she speaks of the city's governance in the language of weaving (*Lys.* 574–86), Athena's distinctive art, celebrated regularly in the women's presentation of the Panathenaic robe.

The same function of city protection did not extend to the cult of

Athena's Roman counterpart, Minerva, who was likely an Italic goddess of independent origin. Interestingly, the Palladium at Rome was secluded in the shrine of Vesta (Livy 26.27.14), the Roman equivalent of the Greek Hestia. For Rome, Vesta was not a private, domestic goddess like Hestia, but the divinity of the public hearth, the Vestal flame that guaranteed Rome's survival and prosperity. The flame's being extinguished was a sign of dangerous disorder in the Roman state, and was also symbolically interpreted as a mark of unchastity and betrayal by one of its six sacerdotal attendants, the Vestal Virgins, vowed to 30 years of service untouched by any male. Effectively the Vestals would be life-long virgins, being too old to conceive children or marry once their term ended. During their period of service they would lose all identification with their birth family as well, since connection with any particular clan would subvert their function as protectors of the whole city. As with Athena in Greece, their virginity represents the impregnability of the city itself: intimacy with any man is an unacceptable form of favoritism and submission, incompatible with their marriage to the state (symbolized by their matronly attire).⁵ The Vestals' veiling and marriage to the state became a model for the early Christian practice of veiling women who consecrated their virginity as "brides of Christ." Indeed, some early Christian texts even cite the Vestals as a positive model within pagan culture (Tertullian, *De exhortatione castitatis* 13; Jerome, *Epistle* 123.8, *Against Jovinian* 41).

Sexual Purity in Greek Religion

Sexual symbolism was certainly common in fertility-oriented cults and rituals, but at the same time a certain sexual reserve surrounds other contexts of religious observance: for instance donning clean clothes before approaching a shrine, not having sex after a funeral, or not exposing one's genitals to the household hearth after intercourse (Hes. *Op.* 733–6). Herodotus (1.198, 2.64) suggests that this concern with cleanliness in the face of the sacred may have Egyptian or Mesopotamian origins; Fehrle (1910, 36–7) suggests the influence of primitive beliefs, reflected in the idea that critical life moments like birth and generation are susceptible to the influence of polluting demons.

While there were numerous sacral offices that required at least a temporary period of sexual chastity (see Fehrle 1910, 90–102; Parker 1983, 86–94), these were typically not life-long appointments; in many cases sacred offices would be filled either by children who had

not yet reached the age of sexual maturity or by women who had passed their child-bearing years. A few exceptions may exist: Apollo's mantic priestesses (Fehrle 1910: 75–80), and perhaps some priests and priestesses of Demeter (Tert. *De exhort. cast.* 13). Pausanias 9.27.6 says that one of the 50 Thespiads refused to have sex with the young Herakles and became a virgin priestess in his cult for the rest of her life; while it is difficult to be certain about the antiquity of this tradition, the anecdote is interesting in that it suggests the sacred vocation as a voluntary choice for the sexually frigid, much as Christian monastic orders would later prove to be.

The Anatolian practice of male self-castration in service of a powerful female divinity (as in the story of Attis and Kybele and her later male followers, the Galli) appears quite foreign to the classical Greek world. Rousselle (1988, 121–7) has argued that this practice had little to do with rejection of sexuality, as castration did not in fact render men impotent but was more related to a renunciation of fertility and children; the vital energy that would otherwise be ejaculated in the form of sperm must be preserved to lift the devotee to a higher union with the divine. Apuleius' depiction of oversexed eunuch priests of the Syrian Goddess (Apul. *Met.* 8.24–9.10) may therefore not be unrealistic.

Despite featuring three virgin goddesses, mainstream Greek religion offered little incentive or approval of life-long chastity for its human adherents. Official cult was far too closely identified with the interests of the *polis*, which depended on healthy population growth and civic engagement, neither of which were consistent with ascetic withdrawal. As Rohde (1966, 299–303) long ago proposed, it is rather to more marginal figures that we should look for teachings of bodily renunciation, as in the archaic traditions of itinerant wise men like Epimenides, Abaris, Aristaeus of Prokonnesos, or Zalmoxis. These shamanistic figures had the ability to live with no nourishment at all or to abandon their bodies and reappear in temporally and geographically remote locations; sources do not associate them with any ties to family or children. Many of them are associated with the far North; indeed, Strabo (7.3–5), drawing on Poseidonios (87 F 104 *FGrH*), prefaces his discussion of Zalmoxis by calling attention to an order of Thracian holy men, variously called *Ktistai* or *Abii*, who abstained completely from consumption of meat and the company of women. Legend came to associate both Abaris and Zalmoxis with the sage Pythagoras, whose teachings also included dietary and sexual restrictions.

In the classical period, ascetic doctrine was best recognized in the forms of Pythagoreanism and its more radical cousin, Orphism. Believing in the transmigration of human souls into animal form, both

religious systems insisted on dietary restrictions that placed them at odds with the traditional animal sacrifice of state cults and festivals. Comparative study of ascetic practices shows that dietary abstinence is usually accompanied by a degree of sexual abstinence.⁶ Aulus Gellius 4.11.9–10 suggests that the prohibition of touching beans common to Pythagoreanism, Orphism, and Empedocles was really a metaphor for testicular abstinence. Pythagoras reputedly told the men of Croton to stop seeing prostitutes and limit themselves to their wives (Iamblichus, *Vita Pythagorae* 132), and he insisted on approaching shrines only with a fresh garment in which he had never slept (111). He considered infidelity to one's wife to deserve special punishment in the underworld (DL 8.21), but he thought no impurity to be occasioned by marital intercourse (8.43).⁷ However, this rather moderate sexual *askēsis* was far from a total rejection of family and sexuality. As Detienne (1975, 55–7) has emphasized, Pythagoreanism, despite its status as a “transgressive system,” functioned within the city and its institutions, so the demands of a Pythagorean lifestyle could not visibly undermine the city's perpetuation; it is rather Orphism that functioned entirely outside of the civic order and with complete indifference to its fundamental institutions.

Although some isolated Orphic communities eventually established themselves in places like Olbia and Hipponion, on the remote fringes of the Greek-speaking world, allusions in drama (Euripides, *Alcestis* 966–71, *Cyclops* 646–8, *Hippolytus* 952–7, *Rhesus* 941–5; Alexis Fr. 140.5 PCG; see Egli 2003, 107–12 for other passages) and Plato (*Ion* 536B, *Cratylus* 400C, *Republic* 364B–5A) suggest that those claiming inspiration from Orpheus were well known in late fifth- and fourth-century Athens as well.⁸ It must be emphasized that, despite the many books attributed to Orpheus, nothing like an organized Orphic theology or church ever existed: it was rather a practice of individual Orpheotelestae who, without any particular credentials, claimed to be able to teach and initiate newcomers into the forms of purification necessary to achieve a blessed afterlife and liberation from the cycle of reincarnation (Burkert 1982; Bernabé 1997). The particular ascetic demands advocated by individual Orpheotelestae doubtless varied in content and stringency.

Many scholars have been inclined to see a strong element of sexual renunciation in Orphic practice (Rohde 1966, 338; Fehrle 1910, 226; Boulanger 1937, 125; Valgiglio 1966, 133–4; Detienne 1975, 70–9; Parker 1983, 301–2; Turcan 1986, 239–40; Bernabé 1997, 39), but explicit textual evidence is elusive. One can certainly imagine that some of the most enthusiastic Orpheotelestae would have enhanced their claims to separation from worldly concerns by complete abstinence from acts that merely continued the cycle of human life.

This was a text-based religion with multiple interpreters employing often complex hermeneutic approaches—and also a religion that attempted to distinguish itself from forms of Orphism of lower understanding, as we see in the work of the Derveni commentator;⁹ hence it should not surprise us that some of its adherents would enhance their own authority by representing themselves as devoted to the most extreme forms of ascetic purity.

The concept of asexual childbirth (Hippolytos' fantasy in Euripides, *Hippolytus* 618–24) was firmly embedded in the earliest and purest stage of the Orphic cosmogony in the form of the Cosmic Egg and the bi-sexed Phanes-Metis, who begets out of him/herself; as Detienne (1975, 71–6) observes, the gods begin undertaking sexual unions, always incestuous, only in the later phases of the Orphic theogony, those that correspond to the degenerated iron age of mankind. Orpheus himself notoriously shunned women after his ascent from the underworld; indeed the mythographer Konon testifies that the earliest and most authoritative explanation of Orpheus' death at the hands of the Maenads was that he excluded the women of Thrace and Macedonia completely from his rites (Fr. 1039 T Bernabé: like all subsequent references to Orphic fragments, this comes from Bernabé's edition = Bernabé 2004–7); he further notes that women were forbidden entrance into Orpheus' hero shrine after his death (Fr. 1080 T). Most iconography and testimonia represent his followers as exclusively male,¹⁰ although the gold tablets suggest that at least some Orphic communities included female adepts. No Orphic fragments suggest any positive valuation of marriage or childbearing for humans seeking to live a pure life; instead, human births are merely represented as a continuation of the “cycles of time” (Fr. 338 B), from which it was the goal of Orphic purification to escape (Frr. 348–9, 467 B). Orpheus' one preserved saying about women is that “no other thing was more dog-like and cold than a woman” (Fr. 846 B). Given the inherent uncleanness of women (Carson 1990) and of heterosexual coitus (Parker 1983, 74–103) in Greek thought, as well as the (at least temporary) abstinence demanded of priests and priestesses in some traditional cults (Fehrle 1910, 90–106), rejection of heterosexual relations should not surprise us as an Orphic ideal, even if it was strictly observed only by the most enthusiastic. Lack of Orphic reproduction may also explain why Orphism, despite its appeal in offering men a desirable immortal afterlife, never succeeded in becoming anything more than a fringe movement.

Important for our purposes is Fr. 472 *TGF*, from Euripides' *Cretans*, a play dealing with Phaidra's mother Pasiphaë and her strange passion. Collard, Cropp, and Lee (1995, 58) have placed this play early in Euripides' career, on metrical grounds, and regard it as the

object of retrospective reference at *Hippolytus* 337–8. This fragment introduces the anapestic parodos of the chorus of the Cretan priests of Zeus; many critics have seen it as a mere syncretistic medley of mystery language, but, in the most detailed and thorough examination of the fragment to date, Giovanni Casadio (1990) has argued that it does in fact reflect a coherent set of ritual purity practices that Euripides would have known from Orphic teachings, although here they are transposed to the cult of Idaean Zeus.

Of particular interest are lines 16–20, where the priests' purity is proclaimed not only through their avoidance of eating ensouled creatures and through their dressing in white garments, but through the fact that they flee the *genesis* of mortals and their burial places (*nekrothēkai*). Critics have usually interpreted the *genesis* of mortals as a reference to the act of childbirth, which, like death, is thought to be polluting. However, the word does not bear such a specific meaning until texts of the first century ce, and even then only in astrological contexts. In classical usage, *genesis* refers more generally to one's genetic heredity and family origins. It does have a more specific connection to childbirth when it refers to the entire length of a pregnancy (as at Hdt. 6.69.5), or as a synonym for *teknopoiia* (Xen. *Lac.* 2.1), that is, for the entire process of baby-making. I would thus translate this line not as “I flee childbirths,” but “I shun the process of begetting children.” Taken in this sense, fleeing *genesis* is a better counterpoint to fleeing *nekrothēkai*, which does not refer to the moment of death but to cemetaries and funerals—in other words to any contact with the dead. If my interpretation is correct, this fragment suggests that Euripides did perceive the doctrine of Orphic purity as being hostile to the generative aspects of sexuality and to the corresponding sexual processes. But it is an extant play, the *Hippolytus*, that may provide us with our most valuable evidence for the perception that complete sexual abstinence was practiced by some Orphics.

The Strange Case of the Euripidean Hippolytus

Euripides' *Hippolytus* offers intimate case studies of two major characters who in their various ways practice sexual *askēsis*. Curiously, it is the hyper-sexualized female Phaidra who comes closest to this practice, understood in the Foucauldian sense—as an ongoing struggle of the self against the self, analogous to what we shall see in later

Christian monasticism. Any sensitive reader of Phaidra's famous speech on *aidōs* (ll. 373–430) will be motivated to doubt Foucault's assertion that women were not agents of ethical problematization (Foucault 1986, 22–3, 184). Her concern with a queen's public position and exemplary status aptly illustrates Foucault's axiom about “virility” with respect to the passions as a qualification for political “virility,” even though here this concern is the reflection of a very feminine woman rather than that of a man. However, Hippolytos offers the example of an even more perfected practice of *askēsis*—not in the Foucauldian sense of ongoing struggle, for this play's Hippolytos never has to struggle with sexual passion at all, but in the form of a complete aversion to sexuality, an essentially asexual identity (see Eur. *Hipp.* 79–80).

Theseus tries to make sense of his son's strange proclivities by saying that he is inspired by the vaporous writings of Orpheus (ll. 948–57). Commentators have generally dismissed these lines by observing that, as a hunter who engaged in killing animals on a regular basis, Hippolytos could hardly be a vegetarian Orphic.¹¹ Moreover, his venerated Artemis held little status in Orphic theogonies. However, when we recall that the cult title of Dionysos Zagreus meant “Dionysos the Hunter” (the *agreus*), we should perhaps not be so dismissive of the possible connection. It was the aim of Euripides' realist drama to portray its characters in the likeness of real people of his own day and time; so, even if Theseus may be mistaken in the details of his identification of a source, Hippolytos did represent a type of individual known in Euripides' Athens who, like some radical Orphics, adhered to a doctrine of purity that precluded intimate contact with females.

There is no question that Euripides showed interest in Orphic literature, its terminology, and its concepts. In this very passage Theseus employs derisively the verb *bakcheueis* (“you act like a bacchant,” l. 954), which was a technical term in the Orphic rites (Jiménez 2009). At the end of the *Rhesus* (941–5), the Muse Kalliope reproaches Athena for being insufficiently grateful that her son Orpheus had taught his mysteries to the Athenians; after the death of Rhesos, she vows that she will bring no more *sophistai* to Athens.

Euripidean drama was interested in exploring all varieties of sexual dissidence, including adultery, incest, bestiality, transvestism, pederasty, and asexuality. In addition to Hippolytos, we find other sexually continent male characters in his plays: Ion (Eur. *Ion* 150); Electra's peasant husband; Bellerophon (who refuses another queen's advances—see Eur. Fr. 293 *TGF*); or the boy Chrysippos, who is so ashamed of his sexual violation by Laios that he commits suicide. Similarly, the priestess Theonoë resolves to remain a virgin for her

entire life (Eur. *Hel.* 1006–8).¹² Hippolytos is not merely a modest youth who believed in abstinence until marriage, as Hanna Roisman (1999, 7–8, 32–4) has argued.¹³ Lines 618–24 are quite categorical in rejecting all contact with women and in wishing that babies could be bought like any other commodity. Orphic communities that shunned marriage and the begetting of children may well have perpetuated themselves through such adoptions; Guthrie (1935, 207–8) has perceived adoption terminology as a key element in Orphic initiation rites and has seen it reflected in at least one of the gold tablets (Bernabé 2004–7, Fr. 488.7 B).

Hippolytos' vision of the untouched but well-watered meadow where he alone can enjoy union and intimacy with the unseen spirit of Artemis (Eur. *Hipp.* 73–87) evokes imagery familiar from Orphic eschatological fragments. The part of the underworld enjoyed by the pure souls that have been released from the cycle of generation is frequently called a meadow (*leimōn*) in Orphic texts and gold tablets (Bernabé 2004–7, Frr. 487.6, 493 B); one (Fr. 340 B) places the meadow along the banks of “deep-flowing Acheron.” That this meadow imagery was early is suggested by its presence in Pindar (Fr. 129 S–M), in one of the eschatological fragments in which scholars see the influence of Orphic teachings about the afterlife (see Lloyd-Jones 1985). The watery character of the *locus amoenus* in which the purified soul finds itself is also made clear in many other gold tablets, of which the one from Petelia (Bernabé 2004–7, Fr. 476 B) is perhaps our most complete example: the soul will first see a spring near a white cypress, which it must avoid, approaching instead the spring that flows out of the Lake of Mnemosyne. This is protected by “guardians” (*phulakes*) not unlike the spirit of Aidos, who oversees Hippolytos' imaginary meadow. And, like in Hippolytos' meadow, only a select group is allowed to enter; in the Orphic tablets the elect must utter the password phrase “I am the son of Earth and starry Heaven, but my race is heavenly [*ouranion*].” In other words, to enter and taste of this spring, the soul must be cleansed of its earthly parts and identify its descent now as purely Uranian. Could it be here that we have the origins of the dichotomy between common and Uranian love, as articulated by Plato's character Pausanias in the *Symposium*?

One other detail in Hippolytos' vision of the pure, uncut meadow must also be emphasized: the springtime bees that pass through it (Eur. *Hipp.* 77). Bees were, conventionally, symbols of purity (Callimachus, *Hymn* 2.110–12), and even of asexuality (Plutarch, *Quaestiones naturales* 36; Aelian, *NA* 5.11; Cassianus Bassus, *Geoponica* 15.2.19). In the Orphic theogony Kronos becomes drunk on the honey of bees and falls into a slumber, which permits Zeus to castrate him just as he had castrated Uranus (Bernabé 2004–7, Frr. 220–5 B); the

bees' produce is thus in some sense responsible for de-sexing the divine patriarch.¹⁴

None of this means that we should necessarily agree with Theseus and interpret Hippolytos as an Orphic, as Valgiglio (1966, 131–4) has proposed. But all this does suggest that Euripides created a character that embodied the same ideology of purity and many of the same ascetic practices that were familiar among Athenian Orphics in Euripides' day. As Scodel (2011, 81) formulates it, “perhaps we should take Hippolytos' Orphism seriously, not necessarily in a literal way that would force us to decide how he reconciles hunting and vegetarianism, but as an allusion to a contemporary milieu that is relevant for understanding his character” (see also Méridier 1928).

Orphism was, fundamentally, a movement of alienation from the polis and its civic rituals; for some, that alienation may have included a refusal to perpetuate the polis through generation of offspring. In this regard, as Detienne (1975) has emphasized, Orphism departed from its more civically engaged predecessors—Pythagoreanism and the Bacchic mysteries. I argue in a forthcoming publication (Hubbard forthcoming) that it was a key goal of Periclean policy to encourage a higher rate of birth among properly married Athenian citizen husbands and wives, as a response to the city's needs for a robust and loyal citizen class to administer its growing empire. Within the context of 428 bce, the likely date of the play's production, Orphism and related ideologies of sexual renunciation thus constitute a fundamental challenge to the family values and perpetuation of patriarchal privilege that Periclean policy encouraged. Hippolytos' choice to lead a private life in the company of his friends, free from family obligations, forms an anti-political statement as well: he makes a point not only of declining to imitate his father's career of sexual conquests, but also of abjuring any interest in the matter of succeeding him as king (Eur. *Hipp.* 1010–20). The king's bastard son by a foreign woman, Hippolytos would not even qualify as an Athenian citizen under Periclean policy. The psychoanalytic critic George Devereux (1985, 38–50) has argued that Hippolytos' pursuit of sexual ascesis in the service of a religiously motivated personal purity is a psychic reaction to what he perceived as the impure and illegitimate circumstances of his own birth. At the very least, we can say that the conflict between father and son is, at some level, that between the patriarchal polis and a voluntarily chosen lifestyle of extra-political, extra-familial renunciation. It is in this late fifth-century “transgressive system,” as Foucault calls it, and only secondarily in Plato, who was much influenced by Orphism (Guthrie 1935, 238–44), that we should find the origins of Greek sexual ascesis.

Sexual Renunciation in Late Ancient Christian Writings: Ascetic Foundations

If Euripides' Hippolytos could boast to be the only one among mortals sufficiently pure to hear the voice of his goddess (Eur. *Hipp.* 83–5), by the second century of the Common Era the notion that sexual abstention provided ordinary people with privileged access to the divine had gained widespread traction. Particularly in Christian circles, to commit oneself to life-long virginity marked a man or woman as superior in the eyes of both God and one's peers. Jerome, a late fourth-century champion of asceticism, could thus advise a teenager who had recently broken an engagement in favor of joining the company of virgins: “Learn from me a holy arrogance—you are better than they are!” (Jer. *Ep.* 22.16). Rejecting marriage and renouncing all sexual activity, Jerome argued, elevated a woman over her married or widowed peers. While members in each group could be considered among Christ's faithful, the rewards they could expect at the final judgment—and the respect they could command in the present era—differed considerably: faithful wives thus resembled the seed that, according to Matthew's gospel, brought fruit thirty-fold; widows resembled the seed that yielded a sixty-fold increase; while the “seed” representing virgins' heavenly treasure exceeded both, as it yielded a hundred-fold reward (Jer. *Ep.* 22.15).

Jerome's contemporaries for the most part lacked his exacting exegetical calculus; nevertheless, the conviction that sexual renunciation in the present life accrued to the renunciants' benefit in their eschatological future was widespread in late antiquity and enjoyed a prolific—and at times combative—cadre of defenders. Accordingly, in sharp contrast to classical witnesses to asexuality or sexual renunciation, Christian sources celebrating or exhorting individuals to live lives of physical continence, or even to strip themselves of all sexual desire, are legion.

The earliest Christian writings—a set of texts roughly coincidental with the New Testament canon—provided the new religion's adherents with resources to construct a variety of visions for the ordering of their sexual lives. The majority of Christians thus embraced life in ordered households that were largely indistinct from those of their pagan contemporaries. These derived their scriptural basis from the household codes of, say, Ephesians 5–6 and 1 Peter 2: 13–3: 7 (see Chapter 33 in this volume). Others, however, seized upon the minority report in the apostolic and pseudo-apostolic sources that

encouraged complete sexual renunciation. Chief among these texts was 1 Corinthians 7, wherein Apostle Paul expresses the wish that “all were as I myself am”—that is to say, that all remain unmarried and chaste—and argues that “he who marries his betrothed does well; and he who refrains from marriage will do better” (1 Cor 7: 7; 38). Similarly, Jesus' sayings concerning those “who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 19: 12) and the suggestion that, at the resurrection, human beings would be free of marriage—and of sexual activity—in favor of existing “like angels in heaven” (Mt 22: 30) offered early Christians tantalizing glimpses into a superior existence: a narrow path that would lead to greater or more immediate intimacy with God. Indeed, the *Revelation of John* suggested that at the final judgment a special place would be reserved for (male) virgins: Only those “who have not defiled themselves with women” would be redeemed from the earth to serve as the Lamb's eternal entourage (Rev 14: 4–5).

Other early writings frequently characterized as “gnostic” offered a still more critical view of the human body and sexuality. While late ancient heresiologists like Epiphanius constructed scandalous narratives of gnostic sects who engaged in illicit orgies, most of the primary source evidence for the various Valentinian, Thomasine, Sethian, and similar groups suggest deeply ascetic, even encratite views of sexuality. The *Gospel of Thomas*, one of the best known and arguably the earliest among gnostic sources, thus emphasizes the blessedness and eschatological happiness of the *monachos*, the solitary, over others' fruitless efforts to enter the heavenly bridal chamber (Saying 75), and the tumult suffered by those beholden to their families (Saying 16). Similarly, while the Thomasine Jesus famously emphasizes the need for females to make themselves male (Saying 114), the task for all believers is ultimately one of “creating something that is neither male nor female”—and that, accordingly, is not subject to bodily needs or sexual desires (Valantasis 1997, 194).

Explicit gnostic influences become less palpable in the writings of the later centuries, although Manichaean groups, for instance, retained elements of gnostic teaching. Gnosticism nevertheless continued to influence later Christian discourse around issues of sexual renunciation, inasmuch as even virginity's most fervent champions felt compelled to affirm marriage and procreation so as to avoid accusations of heterodoxy. In this vein, ascetic enthusiasts like Jerome and Gregory of Nyssa, who did not hesitate to paint family life in the most luridly undesirable terms, nevertheless gave lip service to the need for marital unions, while their contemporary Augustine of Hippo joined a treatise *On the Good of Marriage* to his earlier work *On Holy Virginity*.

In addition to more or less explicit precepts concerning the merits of celibacy, the scriptures contained references to model renunciates: the Nazirites of the Hebrew Bible, John the Baptizer, and Mary, the virginal *theotokos* (“God-bearer”), proved particularly popular among late ancient Christians and quickly took on exemplary roles for ascetics. Mary’s perpetual chastity became a staple of Christian teaching from at least the mid-second century onward, as the pseudepigraphal *Proto-Gospel of James* emphasized her unimpaired virginity even after Jesus’ birth. Female ascetics were exhorted to model their lives of humility, obedience, and, not least of all, sexual purity after Mary. Similarly, male ascetics sought to embrace the Baptizer’s sexual renunciation along with his lifestyle of poverty and withdrawal from society, arguing that the leather belt with which John had girded his loins spoke to his having “mortified ... every genital instinct of his body” (Origen, *On the Passover* 1.36).

Curiously absent from this list of model virgins is Jesus himself. Instead, from the second century onward, Christian writers sought to cast Jesus in the role of the bridegroom who awaited the souls of both male and female renunciants in the celestial wedding chamber. The pervasive image of ascetics as the “brides of Christ,” pursued by their heavenly lover, drew inspiration from the *Song of Songs* and served to encourage this-worldly sexual renunciation while nevertheless affirming marriage as normative and desirable: “Those Christian devotees whom the Church Fathers addressed could rest assured that in return for their present restraint, ‘marriage’ with its largely positive network of associations, including a charged erotic relation, awaited them later” (Clark 2008, 24). As might be expected, however, the full array of exegetical strategies and ascetic practices did not arise spontaneously, but took several centuries to unfold. The following section offers a glimpse at the changing shape of sexual renunciation among Christians across the Roman Empire during the first four hundred years of the Common Era.

Unveiled Virgins and Unmanned Ascetics: Late Ancient Developments

The exegetical legacy of the earliest Christian writings is far from unified. The Pauline corpus in particular lent itself to diverse and at times contradictory expositions. On the one hand, the author of the

so-called Pastoral Epistles could urge that young widows re-marry, so as to not become a financial drain upon the community. On the other hand, the second-century *Acts of Paul and Thekla* portray Paul's preaching of virginity's benefits as the motivation for Thekla's, the text's heroine, abandoning her family and fiancé and embarking on an itinerant ministry leading to her eventual martyrdom.

Paul certainly was not the only character whom late ancient acts sought to turn into a champion of chastity; the equally apocryphal *Acts of Judas Thomas*, for example, present Jesus' own twin as even separating spouses from one another in the name of Christ. Yet it was Paul's name, more than that of any other, that became central to the ecclesial struggle over a peculiarly Christian (lack of) sexual expression. We thus encounter him at the heart of a controversy surrounding our earliest witness to organized forms of sexual renunciation. At the turn of the third century, a group of North African women had apparently decided to dedicate themselves to lives of sexual continence, eschewing marriage and instead presented themselves as living signifiers of the angelic life to come. Accordingly, they appeared in their churches with their heads uncovered, setting aside the veil that marked out adult women (*mulieres*) from their still unmarried sisters (*virgines*), and apparently flouting Paul's command for women to veil themselves while praying or prophesying (see 1 Cor 11: 5). This mandate, the virgins argued, applied only to wives, not to those who had abstained from marriage. In short, by committing themselves to sexless lives, the virgins hoped to shed their gendered identity—the shame that, according to Paul, attended their female nature—along with their procreative function.

Such an argument brought the virgins into direct confrontation with Tertullian, a Christian rhetor who stridently argued that virgins, even more than married women, needed to hide themselves from view (*On the Veiling of Virgins*, *passim*). Without the safeguard of the veil, Tertullian claimed, women's sexual renunciation would give way to pride for the virgins themselves and to increased temptation for their male co-religionists. Both concerns remain central themes throughout late ancient ascetic writings: John Chrysostom, writing in the late fourth century, warns monks intent on cohabiting with female renunciants in private households that virgins retain their youthful desirability well into middle age, since neither marriage nor childbirth would take a toll on their sex appeal (*Instruction and Refutation Directed against Those Men Cohabiting with Virgins* 1). The very act of sexual renunciation, while commendable, added to the intrinsic danger all women posed. Accordingly, virgins needed to be subjected to constant scrutiny, or even sequestered (as for example in the women's monastery founded by Jerome's wealthy friend Paula,

wherein she separated the virgins “so strictly ... from the men that she would not allow even eunuchs to approach them,” Jerome, *Epistle* 108).

While female virgins faced considerable behavioral restraints, sexual renunciation for men could at points take even more drastic forms. Perhaps the most famous account of the lengths to which male ascetics were prepared to go to curb their sexual urges comes from Eusebius of Caesarea's *Ecclesiastical History*: The third-century Christian exegete Origen of Alexandria “took the words, ‘There are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake,’ (Mt 9: 12) in too literal and extreme a sense.” Origen, Eusebius notes with an evident mixture of admiration and horror, took matters into his own hands

in order to fulfill the Savior's word, and at the same time to take away from the unbelievers all opportunity for scandal—for, although young, he met for the study of divine things with women as well as men ... (*Ecclesiastical History* 6.8.1)

While reports of Origen's alleged self-castration hint at a kind of malicious slander against an exegete famously given to spiritual interpretations, other male ascetics apparently drew similarly incisive conclusions from their reading of Matthew's Gospel. In this vein, a number of church ordinances from the Council of Nicaea onward threatened ever stricter penalties on those Christian eunuchs “who are responsible for the condition and presume to castrate themselves” (*Nicene Canons* 1).

Such prohibitions ensured by and large that male ascetics sought out avenues other than self-mutilation to bring their exterior appearance in line with their internal commitment to sexual renunciation. Some, particularly in Syria and North Africa, achieved this end by visually feminizing themselves and growing their hair to unseemly lengths, as Augustine complained (*On the Work of Monks* 39–40). By far the most famous and well-documented avenue for sexual renunciants in late antiquity, however, involved retreat into the desert—whether literally, as in the case of the Egyptian Abbas and Ammas, or metaphorically, as in the case of the “desert” that Gallic monks sought to create for themselves in their settlements.

Two models of ascetic piety acquired particular prominence, each with its own founder, constituency, and implications for sexual ethics. The first of these, anchoritic or solitary monasticism, takes its notional origin from Antony of Egypt. Antony, according to his biographer Athanasios, withdrew farther and farther from civilization, moving from the outskirts of his hometown to an abandoned tomb and finally to a deserted Roman military outpost deep in the Egyptian

desert. Athanasios describes how, after dwelling in the last of these for 20 years while engaging in fasting, prayer, and spiritual combat, Antony emerges from the fort at the insistence of the local populace as the picture of health and serenity: even under extreme conditions of physical deprivation, the truly spiritual person's body would participate in the health and well-being of the soul, the *Life of Antony* suggests.

Athanasius' portrayal of Antony as an unlettered but spiritually enlightened champion of Nicene orthodoxy has been called into question in recent years (see Rubenson 1995). The hagiographically tinged account nevertheless inspired many imitators, and the desert solitary remained a compelling ideal for late ancient ascetics of all stripes. Even as Antony's example was gaining prominence, however, the recognition that the anchoritic life was untenable for many ascetically minded Christians also took hold. Accordingly, alongside it arose a coenobitic or communal model of monastic existence (see Goehring 1999). Its founder, Pachomios, was instructed in a vision to set up sex-segregated communities, the so-called *larvae*, to house those weaker brothers or sisters for whom the Antonine idyll remained out of reach.

While such ascetic lifestyles allowed for little contact with actual members of the opposite sex, the specter of monks or nuns compromising their sexual purity loomed large. Temptations could assail particularly monks, through the memory of women they had known, through demonic appearances, or through stirrings of lust that would drive them into the cities to seek out wives. Erotic dreams proved particularly troublesome, and nocturnal emissions testified to a monk's failure to extirpate the inner stirrings of unchastity. The latter were as damning as the sex act itself to the mind of many late ancient ascetics—so much so that monastic writers like John Cassian devised an intricate calculus of fasting, vigils and prayer, to minimize the potential for wet dreams. Nor were women the only source of temptation for monks. Young boys and even his fellow ascetics could incite a monk to passion. Familiar contact with the former was thus explicitly discouraged (see Freiburger 2009), while monastic rules from the fourth century onward sought to thwart particular friendships between renunciants, for example by entrusting to the supervisor the choice of a monk's companion during periods of absence from the monastery rather than leaving it to the monks' discretion, or by requiring travel in groups rather than pairs (see Basil, *Longer Rule* 39). Even the walls of the monastery did not constitute a bulwark against sexual temptation: while the monastic community excelled the hermit's cave by providing superior opportunities for the development of most virtues, sexual purity, according to Cassian, was

best learned in solitude (*Institutes* 3.3). Extreme trials nevertheless sometimes brought permanent relief. The *Sayings of the Desert Fathers* thus know of a monk who, after resisting 40 days of continuous attack by demons in the guise of beautiful women, received “grace not to suffer the sting of bodily passion ever again” (“Lust” 36).

Motivations and Aspirations: Virginity's Just Deserts

While the mechanics of sexual continence hold considerable fascination, the underlying question of why Christians chose lives of virginity—why, indeed, they sought to read their sacred scriptures through a hermeneutic that assimilated even non-ascetic texts to an agenda of sexual renunciation (see Clark 1999)—is perhaps a still more pressing question. Chief among these reasons was, of course, the anticipation of the superior reward promised for the sexually pure at the last judgment, a point already discussed in the opening paragraph. After the passage of the Edict of Milan in 313 ce, martyrdom had by and large ceased to be an option for accruing benefits in the afterlife for Christians within the Roman Empire. In its place, the notion of “bloodless martyrdom”—the believer’s “dying to self” by way of renunciation—allowed for similarly meritorious achievement without the aid of persecution.

Whereas the supposedly autobiographical account of the third-century martyr Perpetua thus depicts her with the most obvious signifier of her sexual history, the child nursing at her breast, by the fourth century the rhetoric of martyrdom and virginity had become intricately intertwined. Ambrose of Milan’s account of Agnes’ martyrdom thus describes her ordeal in sexually charged language: her impalement by the sword of a Roman soldier images the consummation of her spiritual union with Christ (*On Virginity* 2.1–9). Similarly, sexual renunciation allowed virgins to transcend otherwise static categories in ways that previously had been open only to martyrs: just as martyr acts extol women who perform “manly deeds” in the mid of persecution, references to women’s “masculine courage” and virility of spirit are the stock in trade of ascetic rhetoric. Indeed, at times, renunciants could gain a proleptic glimpse at the angelic condition they expected to enjoy in the resurrection. Gregory of Nyssa thus describes his sister Macrina on her deathbed as having gone “beyond the nature of a woman,” so that “[i]t was as if an angel had by some providence taken on human form” (*Life of Macrina*).

Just how serious a tenet the matter of sexual renunciation's superiority to the married state had become came to light in the so-called Jovinianist controversy. Writing at the end of the fourth century, Jovinian, himself a monk, had claimed that virgins, widows, and the faithfully married all enjoyed equal value in God's eyes. Jovinian's argument resonated well both with the traditional values that had defined Roman society for centuries and with earlier Christian conceptions of asceticism. That his proposal—quite moderate on its own terms—nevertheless unleashed the furor of several of his contemporaries reflects the considerable constituency that advocates of more drastic forms of renunciation could command by the end of the fourth century. Indeed certain groups, particularly aristocratic women, that might have been expected to endorse Jovinian's vision advocated instead a hierarchy of asceticism linked to increasingly stringent forms of sexual renunciation (Hunter 2007).

These elites were by their very nature averse to the flattening of hierarchies. The prospect of transforming one's earthly status into privileged access to divine blessing by virtue of sexual renunciation thus held great appeal for upper-class ascetics. Yet sexual renunciation could offer practical as well as spiritual benefits to its practitioners, as many of its proponents recognized. Sex and death were, after all, more closely connected in late antiquity than in contemporary western society. While Gregory of Nyssa's litany of the grief and terror that characterized the lives of married folk strikes readers as a rather one-sided account, women of all social backgrounds indeed died in childbirth with alarming frequency and suffered the loss of their children or the cruelty or premature death of their husbands (Ambrose, *On Virginity* 3–4).

Where anxiety about sex and its consequences did not serve as a deterrent from marriage, the relative freedom that joining the ranks of ascetics offered, particularly to wealthy renunciants, could attract women to permanent virginity. A young virgin from the upper classes might find herself in control of a considerable fortune; Demetrias, the teenaged scion of the *Gens Anicii*, was thus permitted to keep the dowry that she would have received had she yoked herself to a human rather than a heavenly bridegroom. The exorbitant sum—monies sufficient to pay for the care of more than seventy thousand people—ensured Demetrias' status as a benefactress to churches across the Latin West and attracted the attention of the most distinguished spiritual directors of her era (Clark 1995, 374–5).

For men, too, the practical benefits of sexual renunciation could be considerable. Among the poorer classes, life in one of the early monastic settings had the potential actually to raise their standard of living. Monastic writers were acutely aware that it was frequently the

desire for a roof over one's head and the need to know where one's next meal would come from rather than any spiritual benefit that attracted men and women to monasteries. Augustine's *Rule* suggests, for example, that "they who owned nothing [before entering the monastery]" nevertheless "are to be given all that their health requires even if, during their time in the world, poverty made it impossible for them to find the very necessities of life." Nevertheless, "those should not consider themselves fortunate because they have found the kind of food and clothing which they were unable to find in the world" (1.5). Sexual renunciation could enhance the social standing of renunciants from the upper classes as well: the charisma that attached to the monk's or virgin's perceived purity contrasted favorably with the "compromised" condition of married clergy—a state of affairs that by the late fourth century led to increasingly stringent prohibitions of bishops', presbyters', and deacons' engaging in sexual intercourse (Brown 1982).

Finally, behind the more immediate motives of practical and eschatological benefit that undoubtedly drove most ascetics to lives of permanent chastity, there lurk suggestions of a more abstract, perhaps even a more romantic motive for some of the great exponents of late ancient Christianity. For Origen, Augustine, Gregory of Nyssa, and their contemporaries, sexual renunciation promised practitioners a glimpse at, or even a way back to, the harmony of original creation. While conceptions of humanity's original devolution into sin varied considerably, both eastern and western Christian writers agreed that the relationship Adam and Eve had enjoyed with each other and with God in Eden had suffered considerably in the aftermath of their transgression (see Gen 3). Originally, Gregory of Nyssa suggested, humanity had been created undifferentiated by gender and sex organs, able to reproduce asexually, in the manner of angels—a capacity that was lost after the Fall. According to the Nyssens, it was to this primal state that the resurrection would return humanity (*On the Making of Man* 17.2–4). Sexual renunciation, as in the case of his sister Macrina, promised a foretaste of that happy return to the original Edenic state.

The Nyssens's younger western contemporary, Augustine, envisioned a somewhat different condition for the original couple. Fully equipped with sex organs and dependent even in Eden upon sexual intercourse to bring about reproduction, Adam and Eve would have nevertheless had a chaste marital union, had they remained free from sin: given the complete control the human will had enjoyed over the body prior to the Fall, "[t]hey would not have had the activity of turbulent lust in their flesh ... but only the movement of peaceful will by which we command the other members of the body" (Augustine, *Against Julian* 3.25.57). Unlike Gregory and his eastern colleagues,

Augustine had little confidence that a return to such peaceful dominion over physical desires could be achieved prior to the resurrection (Sawyer 1995). Yet the ascetic who renounced her sexuality could, by constant struggle against the flesh, strive toward that original ideal—the Stoically tinged model of the will's control over the body and its passions.

Conclusion

Perhaps tellingly, most of the Fathers who extolled sexual renunciation were not themselves virgins. Augustine's memoir, the *Confessions*, dwells at length upon his entanglements with women; Jerome confessed that the great distinction of sexual purity had eluded him; Evagrius of Pontos, whose ascetic writings became foundational for both eastern and western monasticism, fled to the desert to escape from an affair with the wife of a Constantinopolitan official. Like parents who desire their children to do better than themselves, these writers sought to spur their audiences toward a good they apprehended but had not themselves enjoyed.

Origen, writing in the middle of the third century, bragged that scores of even the most rustic and uneducated converts had, by virtue of their new-found religious commitment, “become in some way meeker, and more pious, and more consistent—so much so that certain among them, from a desire of exceeding chastity, and a wish to worship God with greater purity, abstain even from the permitted indulgences of love” (*Contra Celsum* 1.26). The trickle of ascetics Origen found among the converts of his era grew to a veritable flood in the century after his death. The tide of sexual renunciation, its opportunities and its discontents, swept Christianity from late antiquity into the depths of the medieval era, the legacy of the Fathers bearing fruit in the lives of the virgins throughout the centuries.

Guide to Further Reading

On the religious basis of Greek concepts of sexual purity, see especially the surveys of Fehrle 1910 and Parker 1983, 74–103. For Orphism specifically, see Guthrie 1935, Linforth 1941, Detienne 1975, and Burkert 1982. On the development of the Christian ideal of virginity, see especially Clark 1995, as well as the surveys by Brown 1988 and Elm 1994. On changing ideals of masculinity and the role of

sexual renunciation in its construction, see Kuefler 2001. On specifically Egyptian monasticism and sexuality, see Brakke 2006. On asexuality and sexual renunciation in so-called heretical Christian groups, see Burrus 2007; Clark 1988 (Manichean); Hunter 2007 (Jovinianist); and Pagels 1988 and King 1988 (gnosticism).

Notes

1 The first four sections, which deal with classical antiquity, are written by Thomas K. Hubbard; the last four sections, which deal with late antiquity and Christianity (from “Sexual Renunciation in Late Ancient Christian Writings” on) are written by Maria Doerfler.

2 The names of famous courtesans or female poets sometimes emerge out of darkness, and Herodotus (7.99) tells us of the vigorous and unusual Halicarnassian queen Artemisia, about whose marital status we know nothing.

3 Note the reticence with which the speaker of Lysias' *Against Simon* refers even to his widowed sister and her daughters, who “have lived in such an orderly way as to be ashamed at being seen even by their own kinsmen” (3.6).

4 On Elektra's sterility, and even androgyny, see the interesting analysis of Popescu 2012, 177–83.

5 For interesting studies of the symbolic significance of the Vestals' sacred virginity, see Beard 1980; Staples 1998, 131–56; Parker 2004; and Wildfang 2006, 51–63.

6 See Freiberger 2009, 125–31, 217–26. Rousselle (1988, 176) notes that restricted diets tend to produce lack of sexual appetite and even impotence in males, amenorrhea in females.

7 On Pythagorean doctrines of abstinence, see also Parker 1983, 296–9.

8 Some have seen the allusions to Aeschines' mother performing initiation rites with readings from sacred books (Dem. 18.259–60, 19.199) as evidence of Orphic mysteries, but the passages do not mention Orpheus and seem in other respects more descriptive of Bacchic rites.

9 See especially col. 7.9–11 and the remarks of Most 1997, 120–3.

10 For the iconographical evidence of Orpheus' exclusively male followers in Thrace, see *LIMC* VII, 84–5, especially nos. 7–16, 22–4. In scenes with both men and women (nos. 25–31), the women are armed and hostile, the men either protective or remote from the action.

- 11 See, e.g., Linforth 1941, 50–9; Barrett 1964, 342–3. Casadesús (1997) sees the passage as an attack on Orphic impostors that has little to do with Hippolytos' own character.
- 12 For the sexual purity of other priestly figures in Euripides, see Hamilton 1985, 70–2.
- 13 Her view is based on a misunderstanding of ll. 640–1, in which she believes he contemplates eventual marriage. The lines merely say that he does not want a clever woman living in the same house as himself.
- 14 In an elegant essay, Detienne (1981) has argued for the centrality of honey in the myth of Orpheus. In Virgil's *Georgic* 4, the beekeeper Aristaeus loses his bees precisely as a result of his sexual transgression against Orpheus' wife Eurydice.

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Chapter 11

Sexual Abuse and Sexual Rights

Edward E. Cohen

Slaves are always exploited, but the individual slave is frequently in a good position to provide the master with a poor return on his investment ...to make disastrous contracts for him, to exploit him sexually, and even to assault or kill him.

Watson 1987, 1

Allusion to slaves' "sexual rights" may seem oxymoronic in the context of modern scholarly perception of Athens and Rome as societies in which slaves had absolutely no rights (other than perhaps a theoretical entitlement not to be murdered: *Dig.* 34.1.6; 1.6.2; Harrison 1968–71, 1: 171–2; Klees 1998, 176–217). Indeed, any suggestion that "domestic slaves in antiquity were recognized as 'persons' in principle" may even be "shocking to writers educated in an Anglophone tradition" (McKeown 2007, 36; compare Bradley 2001). Slaves' erotic experience instead is often assumed to consist, at best, of tolerated sexual contact, fleeting or prolonged, with other slaves—permitted mainly to allow replacement of owners' stock of human chattels (Bradley 1987, 47–80; Wiedemann 1987, 178). At worst, slaves' sexual life is often assumed to consist largely or entirely of degrading, sometimes even life-threatening, erotic exploitation by free persons, especially by owners (Greece: Fisher 2010, 71; Rome: Bradley 1994, 81–106, Garrido-Hory 1981, 1998). "The slave body was sexually available, especially to males of the master class; the male slave was ...[a] form of dildo for the women of the master class" (duBois 2003, 104 [Greece]; see duBois 2009, 320–1).

In reality, however, slaves' sexual situation in the ancient world was far more nuanced (Kudlien 1991, 40). Athens and Rome—the only political entities in the classical world for which sufficient information has survived to permit meaningful discussion of the erotic experience of unfree persons—demonstrate this multifaceted

complexity. At Rome and within its empire, multi-generational connubial relations of high domesticity are often attested—as are multiple episodes of erotic abuse of the unfree. Owners' control over the sexual availability and experience of slaves and masters' erotic use of slaves are tempered by legal and practical realities and coexist with servile sexual experience sometimes similar to that of the free population: we know of many instances of Roman slaves' heterosexual monogamous relations with other unfree persons. In the city of Rome slaves came sometimes to enjoy considerable wealth and power, even owning their own slaves, sometimes in large numbers, and taking wives or concubines who were themselves free. Outside Rome, some slaves lived independently of their owners, sometimes at far-removed locations across the seas or in distant provinces (Dig. 40.9.10; 5.1.19.3).

At Athens, slaves (in Greek, *douloi* in the masculine and *doulai* in the feminine; singular forms respectively *doulos*, *-ē*) experienced sexual treatment and opportunity that varied according to their financial situation, gender, living arrangements, and form of ownership—and were further filtered through the differentiating context of household (*oikos*) or community relationships. Slaves owned by the state (*dēmosioi*) sometimes were in a position sexually to exploit free persons. Male *douloi* might patronize brothels—or be forced into service within brothels. Female slaves might be compelled to work as prostitutes in addition to handling their other domestic household duties—such as wool-working—or might themselves operate brothels, sometimes under an income-sharing arrangement (*apophora*) with their owner! Slaves living outside the household (*douloi chōris oikountes*) might maintain their own residences and cohabit in continuing monogamous relationships, often with minimal contact of any kind with their owners. At Athens, in contrast to some other Greek cities, slaves had no duty to defer in any context (including the erotic) to free persons outside their own *oikos*, and even within the *oikos* they were to some extent protected—by social structure and by law—from flagrant sexual abuse.

Athens

Slaves' sexual exploitation, slaves' sexual protection

In a patriarchal society such as that of Athens, in which male citizens might be sexually active with both male and female partners and might own both male and female slaves, pervasive sexual abuse of these slaves might reasonably be (and has been) assumed—an expectation fortified by the widespread erotic debasement known to have occurred in better attested, more recent historical societies having large numbers of slaves (Anderson 2010; for North America, see Woodward 1981, 29; Jacobs 1987, 27; Faust 1982, 87). Similarly, at Rome and elsewhere, there is much evidence of many enduring “familial” relationships among slaves, and one might therefore, *a priori*, assume a similar phenomenon at Athens. There is, however, virtually no clear evidence from classical Athens confirming either presumption—a lacuna that may reflect merely the chance nature of evidentiary survival, Athenian reticence about personal erotic narratives (Aeschines 1.137 and *passim*), and the “ignominious truth” that “there are no ancient statistics” (Jones 1948). Indeed, the best attested-seeming confirmation of family groupings among unfree residents of Athens—the apparent listing of slave couples (and children) on silver cups (*phialai exeleutherikai*) dedicated as markers of manumission—has recently been plausibly attributed not to groups of slaves, but to families of free aliens (*metoikoi*) residing at Athens (Meyer 2010; cf. Faraguna 1999, 68–79). Surviving Athenian evidence, however, does testify both to slave-owners’ virtually unlimited power over their human chattels and to juridical and societal strictures inhibiting the wanton exercise of that power in an erotic context, which underlines the inherent tension between Athenian support for the authority of a master and the social structures and legal rules protecting dependent persons.

Despite a number of self-congratulatory references to men restraining themselves from sexual contact with dependants (Garlan 1988, 152–3, citing Plato, *Laws*; Isocrates, *Nikokles*; and Aristotle, *Oeconomica*), explicit evidence for erotic abuse of unfree persons at Athens is sparse and equivocal:

- Lysias 1 is often cited as an example of the Athenian male’s predatory exploitation of female slaves (Golden 2011, 149). But in this case the master’s spouse locks him in his bedroom, lest—his wife asserts—he renew his prior drunken “attempt” at the household’s servant girl. (With her “master,” *kurios*, dominantly imprisoned, his wife proceeds to enjoy sex with her citizen lover without interference!) (Lysias 1.11–13).
- Hypereides’ speech *Against Athenogenes* provides the fullest, but ambivalent, information on an Athenian master’s predatory erotic exploitation of male slaves. Athenogenes, the owner of a youth for whom the Athenian citizen Epikrates is lusting, offers

to sell the slave (and control over the slave's sex life to Epikrates (§ 5, “so that no one shall seduce the boy”: *pais*, a standard Athenian term for a child, slave, or “passive” sexual partner of any age, Dover 1989, 16). As a result of the sale, Athenogenes asserts, the *doulos* will have to behave himself sexually (in Greek, *mē porneuesthai*, an apparent pun on *porn-* in the sense of “whoring,” i.e. “so that he will not sell himself [to others]”) (§6). For his part, as master, Epikrates will be free to use the boy as he wants (*ton paida chrēsthai*) (§§ 24–5). In fact, however, Epikrates proceeded to purchase not only the youthful object of his passion but also the “boy's” brother and father, Midas, who operated a substantial perfume business that was insolvent. In his subsequent legal action seeking to impose on Athenogenes, as Midas' earlier owner, liability for the perfume business' debts, Epikrates claims that he had purchased the father only because the son had come to him and told him that he “could not stay with” (the prevailing bowdlerized translation for *suneinai*, which also means “have sex with”) Epikrates unless he bought all three of the slaves (§ 24). We need not, of course, accept as fact Epikrates' insistence that he, a free Athenian citizen, was actually manipulated into economic disaster by his future slave's threatened withholding of sex. Nor need we accept as truth Epikrates' further claim that Athenogenes had also inveigled him into purchasing the slaves (rather than merely paying for their freedom) by suggesting that Epikrates would gain “doubled *charis*” from these slaves if he first bought them and later himself freed them (§ 6). A male citizen desirous of winning slaves' egalitarian good-will (*charis*)? (On *charis* as the term quintessentially reserved for one citizen's obligation of favorable future repayment of kindness or service received from another citizen, see Millett 1998, 231, n. 8; Herman 1998, 210–13.) Athenian forensic presentations offer, of course, only one side of a dispute: we have no means of ascertaining the truthfulness of any specific assertion. Yet, since such speeches were delivered to juries numbering in the hundreds, and since persuasion was the speaker's overriding goal, it seems reasonable to posit the existence or occurrence at Athens of phenomena (such as the plausibility of an owner's desire to win the *charis* of a slave to whom he is sexually attracted) presupposed by a litigant's assertion, even if we cannot establish the truth of the specific statement—provided that the phenomenon lies within the putative general knowledge of the jurors.

- There are a few other equivocal or suggestive passages from

comedy or satire that are sometimes cited as proof that “the slave body was sexually available” (duBois 2003, 104–5, referencing Aristophanes, *Acharnians* 271–5 and Herodas, *Mime* 5—mid-third century Alexandria).

In contrast to this dearth of positive evidence for masters' acts of carnal exploitation at Athens, considerable detail survives on aspects of social structure and law that would have tended to inhibit the adult male from unfettered functioning as a sexual predator. Late marriage for men encouraged prolonged male dependence; early marriage for women meant early social maturation—and (because of relatively low longevity) in many cases early widowhood (Hunter 1989). The tendency of many widows to reside with their mature married (and unmarried) children often resulted in control of household operations, and even of household morality, by these senior women (Cox 1998, 99–103, 211–12; Cohen 2000, 33–8). Largely because of his mother's presence, Lysias, for example, did not dare to bring his girlfriend, even chaperoned by her “mother,” to his own home (Dem. 59.22). And, even free of mother or mother-in-law, the Athenian male might be far from a domineering sexual exploiter. In Menander's *Plokion*, for example, the husband of Krobyle is portrayed as reduced to whining ineffectively after his wife has ejected from the house a female slave in whom he was interested (Frr 296–7 K–A; Acton 2010, 38).

Furthermore, communal values—especially a pride in Athens' self-trumpeted benevolent generosity to humankind (in Greek, *philanthrōpia*)—offered at least some defense against the sexual abuse of slaves and other dependent persons. A fundamental Athenian statute, well-attested in the surviving testimonia, purported to protect every inhabitant of Attica, “whether free or slave,” from *hubris* (exploitation or abuse). Because of “the centrality of *hubris* ...in Athenian social relations” (Cohen 1991, 171), this legislation potentially affected many aspects of Athenian behavior. Yet its prime impact was felt in a sexual context, for eroticized misconduct was a fundamental and frequent manifestation of *hubris*. Of approximately 500 occurrences of *hubris* or its cognates in the principal surviving Athenian prose authors, 82 incidents relate to sexual misconduct—more cases by far than of any other typology (Cohen 1991, 172–3; MacDowell 1976; Fisher 1976, 1979). Rape is repeatedly denominated as *hubris* (Dobelhofer 1994, passim; Dover 1989, 36; Omitowoju 1997, 3–7). In fact Aristotle specifically warns rulers that, of the various manifestations of *hubris*, the sexual abuse of boys and girls and the physical violation of individuals are most to be avoided (*Politics* 1315^a14–16). (Aristotle significantly does not differentiate between freemen and slaves in cases of bodily violence.) The public slave Pittalakos brands as *hubris* the actions of the well-connected Athenian

citizens Hegesandros and Timarchos who, as the dénouement of a sexual triangle, had sadistically tied Pittalakos to a column and whipped him during a nocturnal revel (Aeschines 1.62).

This statute authorized a public prosecution (*graphē*) for *hubris* “whenever someone intentionally insults the honor (*hubrizēi*) of another, whether a child or a woman or a man, whether free or slave, or does something improper (*paranomon*) against any such person” (Dem. 21.47). The law thus prohibits “the deliberate infliction of serious insult on another human being” (Fisher 1995, 45), a broad coverage confirmed explicitly by other contemporary sources—including Demosthenes’ prime rival, Aeschines, who in independent context cites the legislation in language virtually identical with that of Demosthenes (Aeschines 1.15; cf. Hypereides, *Against Mantitheos* Fr. 37 Burt). Accordingly, there is “general agreement [that] we possess the actual text of the law as it stood in the fourth century” (Fisher 1992, 36), the “genuine law” (MacDowell 1990, 263)—albeit a text that, in its wide protection of Attica’s *untermenschen*, conflicts starkly with the allegedly unlimited right of owners to exploit slaves. As a result of this contradiction, the law’s “plain meaning”—its extension of protection to slaves—has tended to be disregarded, dismissed as “incoherent” or impossible (Gernet 1917, 183–97; Murray 1990, 140), or arbitrarily deemed a “forgery” (Harris 2008, 103).

Even those scholars who accept the law’s explicit statement of protection for slaves and other dependants often assume the provision to have been meaningless in actual practice—a phenomenon similar to modern western societies’ long history of ignoring or trivializing sexual abuse against minor and female family members. Harrison, for example, considers that there was not even a “slender chance” that any outsider would actually prosecute an alleged act of *hubris* committed by a master against his slave (1968–71, 1: 172).

In fact, however, Athenian values encompassed a strong ideological commitment to aid unrelated persons who might be victimized. Solon reportedly considered the ideal state to be one in which otherwise uninvolved persons came to the aid of those being wronged and punished the wrongdoers: a key element in his legislation was the authorization for volunteers to act on behalf of unrelated victims ([Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 9.4; Plu. *Sol.* 18.3–8). In his enunciation of Athenian values in the Funeral Address, Perikles alludes to the Athenians’ obedience to the laws that provided aid for persons being wronged (Thucydides 2.37.3). Friends frequently take an active role as arbitrators in reconciling various members of a “household” (*oikos*), in many cases effectively protecting dependent members of that *oikos* (Dem. 36.15, 41.14; Scafuro 1997, 131–5). Substantial evidence suggests that extension of Athenian legal

protection to slaves was not, in fact, entirely illusory.

The law specifically provided that prosecution for *hubris* could be pursued by any Athenian citizen (*politēs*)—in contrast to the usual requirement, in a private action (*dikē*), of suit by the victim directly (a virtual impossibility for a slave) or through his or her male representative (again, often a practical impossibility in abuse cases, since that *kurios* might be the alleged malefactor or someone favorably close to the perpetrator). Even our sparse knowledge of actual Athenian litigation provides several examples of third parties instituting actions on behalf of women, children and other dependants and confirms Demosthenes' statement that harsh punishment, even the death penalty, had actually been meted out in many cases involving victimization of slaves (Dem. 21, 48–9). Deinarchos reports that at the Eleusinian festival the Athenian *politēs* (“citizen”) Themistios had been put to death for *hubris* against a Rhodian lyre-girl, and that a certain Euthymachos was executed for forcing an Olynthian slave woman into a brothel (Dem. 23; Todd 2006, 104–5). Legal actions also appear to have been brought over the hubristic treatment of another enslaved Olynthian woman by Athenians at a Macedonian *sumposion* after Philip's destruction of Olynthos (Dem. 19.196–8; Aeschines 2.4, 153–5), although “we do not know enough about these cases to know in what circumstances they did, or might, reach the courts” (Fisher 1995, 69–70). In several cases, third parties are known to have come forward on behalf of unrelated dependent persons (Dem. 38.23; Isaios 7.5–7). When Neaira claimed to have been subjected to *hubris* by the Athenian *politēs* Phrynion (who professed to be her master), the Athenian *politēs* Stephanos (whom she had only recently met) responded to her appeal, bringing an action against Phrynion (Dem. 59.37–40; see Andreau and Descat 2006, 165). Similarly, the slave Pittalakos was able to call on the influential *politēs* Glaukon to vindicate his legal rights against harassment by the prominent Hegesandros—who claimed that Pittalakos was his slave (Aeschines 1.62).

Nonetheless, in a society where slave owners seem routinely to have prostituted their *doulai* openly and without censure (see next section), a master's impairment of the sexual “honor” of a slave presumably would have had to involve behavior extraordinarily outrageous—“gross and brutal treatment,” posits Fisher (1992, 40), an injury far more traumatic than “simple physical violence” (Schaps 1998, 170, n. 44). In contrast, the structure and values of Athenian society tended to protect slaves against even relatively slight sexual (and other) abuse from persons *not* members of the slave's household (Paradiso 1999). Beyond his/her own *oikos*, the Athenian *doulos* or *doulē* was under no legal obligation of subservience to free inhabitants

of Attica. (Athens differed from some other Greek jurisdictions where a slave might be treated with disdain, and even struck with impunity by any free person: MacDowell 1978, 81.) Thus even the prominent Kallippos, *proxenos* of the Heracleots, pressing a claim at a bank, was dismissed by a slave functionary with the derisive “And what business is it of yours?” (Dem. 52.5–6). A slave’s ability to deal on a basis of equality with free persons outside the *oikos* was frequently critical to the orderly operation of businesses—which at Athens were largely staffed by slaves (Finley 1999, 69; Cohen 2003, 148–52). *Douloi* employed in banking, for example, often had access to large sums of money: if they felt compelled to defer to free customers, the banks would be endangered. A contemporary observer saw this clearly. Noting (and lamenting) the elevated economic and social position of Athenian slaves, including their failure to show obeisance to free persons, the author of the *Xenophonic Constitution of the Athenians* (1.10–11) attributes it all to money (*apo chrēmātōn*): for persons receiving a share of the earnings of their slaves, “it is not profitable” to have their slaves “fear” the free persons whom they encounter. Indeed, “if your slave fears me, there will be a danger that he will give away the money in his possession so as not himself to be at risk.”

The Athenian institution of “slaves living independently” (*douloi chōris oikountes*) permitted unfree persons to conduct their own businesses, establish their own households, and sometimes even own their own slaves (see *IG ii*² 1570.78–9)—with little contact and, most importantly, virtually without supervision from their owners (Cohen 2000, 130–54). The personal situation and sexual opportunities of such slaves appear to have been somewhat comparable to those of free persons. The slave Meidas, for example, operated a substantial perfume shop with his two sons, providing his owner with reports only monthly and being subject only to a fixed payment (Hypereides, *Athenogenes* 9). The charcoal burner in Menander’s *Epitrepontes* is a slave who maintains a residence outside the city with his wife and merely pays his owner a portion of his earnings (ll. 378–80). The wealthy banker Phormion was accused of having fathered a son by the wife of his owner while he was still a slave (Dem. 45.84): he subsequently married this woman, the owner’s widow, Archippe, and together they produced two more children (Dem. 45.4; Davies 1971, 427–42). The “public slave” (*dēmosios*) Pittalakos reportedly made use of his wealth to maintain Timarchos, a young male citizen, in the slave’s own home for a prolonged period of sexual exploitation and thereafter allegedly battled with a powerful citizen, Hegesandros, for Timarchos’ sexual favors (Aeschines 1.54–64). Less affluent slaves might have been the potential customers whom Aristophanes in the *Ecclesiazousae* (Ecc. 717–24) comically proposes to be serviced by

female slaves in brothels: free prostitutes should hereafter accept only free men as customers.

“Home, sweet home?” Prostitution as domestic labor

Most slaves lived and worked “at home,” that is, within an *oikos* (“household”), “the basic unit of social and economic organization” at Athens (Foxhall 1989, 42). An Athenian *oikos* included all the persons living in the household residence: husband, wife, children, and (explicitly in the ancient testimonia) slaves. In a ceremony analogous to that which greeted the entry of a bride, a newly purchased slave was welcomed into the *oikos* with an outpouring of figs, dates, and other delicacies intended to portend a “sweet and pleasant” future (*Lexica Segueriana* [Bekker] 269.9; Mactoux 1990). Once ensconced within a household, a slave might anticipate an extended presence: there is a remarkable absence from our sources of even a single instance of a slave being abandoned because of the infirmities of old age (Pomeroy 1994, 223). Yet kind treatment of slaves was merely an option that might be chosen by self-interested masters (Pl. *Lg.* 6.777D; Xen. *Oec.* 5.16, 7.24, 7.37): within the constraints of household dynamics, masters were free to treat slaves as they wished, subject only to the prescription against *hubris*. But there is no suggestion in our sources that a master’s requiring a slave to work as a prostitute constituted *hubris*. To the contrary, at Athens prostitution was both lawful (Lanni 2010, 55; MacDowell 2005, 85; Gagliardi 2005, 91–3) and pervasive (Xen. *Mem.* 2.2.4; Theopompos of Chios, *FGrH* 115 F 213), and considerable evidence survives attesting to slaves’ labor as prostitutes.

Because at Athens an owner’s household was the physical location of virtually all business establishments and workshops (Nevett 1999, 66–7, 88; Golden 2011, 135), for slave prostitutes the *oikos* was likely to be both their place of work and their place of residence. (Aeschines 1.124 actually describes a single house that was used, by turns, as business place and home by a doctor, a smith, a fuller, and a carpenter, and also as a brothel.) In contrast to the glamorous, predominantly free courtesan “companions” (*hetairai*) chronicled in the literary tradition, resplendent in luxurious and sumptuous homes of their own (Xen. *Mem.* 3.11; Davidson 2004), “the prostitution of slaves was paradigmatically based in brothels” (*porneia*) (Flemming 1999, 43; Davidson 1997, 90–9; Kapparis 1999, 228–9).

Within these household brothels, Athenian prostitutes received

instruction in the provision of sexual services. Like handicraft, catering, and medicine (Xen. *Oec.* 1.1; Pollux 4.7. 22), sexual work was considered a *technē* (Dem. 59.18)—a field requiring knowledge and skill, for which *douloi* and *doulai* generally received substantial training, vocational education that free persons often lacked (Xen. *Mem.* 2.7.4). *Douloi* working in banks were taught the intricacies of finance and accounting (Dem. 45.72). Operators of meretricious businesses anticipated that imparting erotic skills to sex workers would generate substantial revenues (Xen. *Smp.* 4.59–60). Accordingly, young slaves selected for prostitution received specialized instruction (Alkiphron 4 passim; Lucian, *Dialogues of Courtesans* 4.3, 10.4), including lessons in dance (Aristophanes, *Thesmophoriazousae* 1177–98). Nikartete's young prostitutes are illustrative. A former prostitute herself, a free person of servile origin married to a cook who appears to have been entirely uninvolved in his wife's sexual business, Nikartete earned her living (*bios*) from her talent at identifying, cultivating, “skillfully” training and then selling the services of attractive young girls (Dem. 59.18).

Customers in household/bordellos were also serviced by male slaves (whose numbers are unknown but are assumed to have been far lower than those of female brothel prostitutes: Davidson 1997, 77). But we do know that references to brothel prostitutes are usually to females when nominal forms (*pornos*, *pornē*) are employed, and usually to males when verbal forms occur (*porneuō* and cognates) (McClure 2003, 15).

Even the best educated and most highly skilled *douloi* often performed multiple tasks. Slaves working as doctors or as doctors' assistants are known to have devoted part of their time to household duties (Kudlien 1968; Joly 1969). Domestic servants often worked at both household tasks and commercial pursuits (Garlan 1988, 62; Jameson 2002, 168–70). Many female slaves worked at home as both brothel prostitutes and wool-workers (Wrenhaven 2009, 375; Neils 2000; Rodenwaldt 1932; *pace* Bundrick 2008, 296), and slaves frequently combined the provision of musical entertainment with the practice of prostitution (Hamel 2003, 9–12; McClure 2003, 21–2). A fourth-century Hippocratic author notes matter-of-factly the case of a danseuse owned by a woman who employed her as a prostitute (*On Generating Seed* 13 (VII, 490 Littré = Lefkowitz and Fant 232). Aeschines, charging Timarchos with betraying his free status by acting in a slavish fashion, specifically accuses him of combining work as a prostitute with a purported pursuit of training in medicine (1.40).

Although sex could be purchased at Athens relatively inexpensively—the lowest sum mentioned for a single act by a female prostitute is one *obol* (Philemon, Fr. 3 PCG)—some brothel prostitutes commanded

high fees, part (or most) of which they might have retained for their personal use pursuant to individually negotiated arrangements with their masters. In Menander's *Epitrepontes*, Charisios is portrayed as spending a startlingly high 12 drachmas per day for sex with Habrotonon, a brothel slave—money paid to her apparent master. The prostitute's owner would, of course, have been legally entitled to all sums paid for the slave's sexual services; *stricto sensu*, a master was legally the owner of any personal property informally “belonging” to his or her slave (Attic stelae: Stele 6, 31–46, in Pritchett, Amyx, and Pippin 1953; Langdon 1991, 70). But, in practice, an enslaved *pornē* like Habrotonon was still able to benefit personally from at least a portion of the large sums paid for her erotic labor. Lysias, for example, paid for Metaneira's enjoyment of the festivities at Eleusis and for her initiation into the Mysteries—knowing that her master could not appropriate this personal emolument (Dem. 59.21–2). More importantly, the institution of *apophora*—a sharing between master and slave of the *doulos*' earnings—was highly developed and broadly practiced at Athens. Slaves often paid their owners a fixed sum while working and living on their own: the *douloi* kept for themselves all revenues beyond the portion owed to their masters (Aeschines 1.97: leather-workers; Men. *Epitr.* 376–80: charcoal-burner). *Apophora* arrangements benefitted slave craftsmen employed in the construction trades (Randall 1953; Burford 1963) and slaves involved in the production of pottery (Webster 1973). Even individual slaves working in the mines are known to have shared their revenue with their masters (Andocides 1.38). At a vastly more elevated level, the *douloi* Xenon, Euphron, Euphraios and Kallistratos—while still enslaved—operated, as principals, the largest bank in Athens, that of Pasion. Their only involvement with their owners appears to have been the annual payment of fixed lease obligations: they retained excess revenues (if any) for themselves (Dem. 36.14, 43, 46, 48).

Neaira's life, as presented in Demosthenes 59, illustrates how individual slave prostitutes might accumulate cash savings from the retention of a share of the revenues generated by their services. When Neaira has the opportunity to purchase her freedom from Timanoridas and Eukrates for the enormous price of 3,000 drachmas (perhaps US \$150,000–\$300,000, at purchasing price parity) she covers most of this cost with cash contributions from various past patrons—and provides the rest from her savings! (Dem. 59.29–31).

The sumptuous lifestyle maintained by male prostitutes is a recurrent *tropos* in Greek comedic theater (Ephippos Fr. 20 PCG; Alexis Fr. 244 PCG; Ar. *Eq.* 424, *Nu.* 690–2). Similarly, elite Athenian women haplessly envied the visible luxury, extensive gold jewelry, and fine clothing of the alleged slave/prostitute supported by

Olympiodoros (Dem. 48.55). Prostitutes of slave origin frequently enjoyed considerable prosperity after gaining their freedom, in some cases eventually operating their own sex businesses, which often utilized several or more prostitutes whom they had purchased. The career of Neaira's first owner, Nikarete, is illustrative. Herself originally a prostitute who was the property of an Elisian, Nikarete obtained her freedom and came to own women whom she provided at high prices at festivals and *sumposia* throughout Greece, to "wealthy and distinguished men, poets, foreign aristocrats and masters of (literary) composition" (Davidson 1997, 92). When not traveling, she maintained a residence in Corinth, enjoying an "extravagant" (*polutelēs*) life (Dem. 59.29).

Rome

Modern scholarship consistently sketches Rome as a unitary world in which a slave—Latin *servus* (masculine), *serva* (feminine) *servi*, *servae* (plural)—devoid of sexual rights, was vulnerable to severe erotic abuse. Slave owners had unlimited erotic access to *servi* and *servae* (McGinn 1998, 196), and supposedly made full exploitative use of that power—which was restrained only by their (occasional) self-control. But the "true domain" of the slave's sexual life (*le vrai domain*) was supposedly the misery of exploitative prostitution (Andreau and Descat 2006, 165). Again, for Rome as for Athens, actual surviving evidence tends to lead to more nuanced conclusions.

Although "slaves were technically not permitted to marry" (Bradley 1987, 50; compare Robinson 2011, 424), Roman *servi* nevertheless commonly lived together in monogamous relationships (*contubernia*) functionally equivalent to marriage (Paulus, *Sententiae* 2.19.6; Bodel 2011, 347–9). Roman literature routinely treats such slave unions as "marriage" (Martial, *Epigrams* 4.13; Juvenal 11.146 and following; Ammianus Marcellinus 28.1.49). Surviving funerary inscriptions, written by or for the slaves mentioned in these epitaphs, describe such relations in matrimonial terms (*maritus/uxor*; *coniunx/coniunx*: e.g. *CIL* 6.7296, 6.9776, 8.20084) and attest to slaves' creation of traditional Roman familial arrangements—monogamous unions (Williams 1958) involving sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers—terms identical to those used in Latin to describe the same relationships among free persons (e.g. *CIL* 6.6335, 6358). These servile arrangements were inherently so inseparable from legal "marriage" that in some contexts even conservative Roman jurists extended to these slave relationships the legal rules governing civil

marriage (*conubium*) (see, for example, *Dig.* 33.7.12.33 [Ulpian]: “family members [*contubernales*] of slaves, that is, wives and children” are to be included in a legacy which related expressly only to a male slave; *Dig.* 23.2.14.2 [Paulus]: prohibitions on incest are applicable to servile marriage [*affinitas*] and to slave family situations). Although in theory, of course, such relationships could arise only with a master's consent, owners' acquiescence appears to have been routinely forthcoming, both because of the masters' economic interest in his slaves' procreation and because the easing of sexual tensions and the establishment of permanent intimate arrangements were believed to make *servi* easier to manage and more productive (Varro, *De re rustica* 1.8.5; 2.10.6). Once entered into, such relationships even received some explicit legal assistance: a number of imperial rulings, for example, actually protected slave families against forcible separation (Sicily: *Theodosian Code* 2.25.1, *Justinian Code* 3.38.11; Africa: *Dig.* 33.7.27.1).

Not all servile connubial relations, however, were with other slaves. At Rome, some *servi*, having attained considerable wealth and power, actually owned their own slaves, sometimes in large numbers (Watson 1987, 95). Such slaves might “marry” women who were free (Weaver 1972, 112–36). In fact a number of the marital relations described in Roman funerary inscriptions attest to a wife who apparently was originally the property of a husband who was himself a slave (Joshel 2010, 143). Not only powerful slaves could pursue their own sexual objectives: Tacitus, for example, reports that the prominent prefect of the city of Rome, Pedanius Secundus, owner of some 400 *servi*, may have been murdered by one of his household slaves because of Secundus' “competition” with the slave for a prostitute (*exoletus*) who was a love interest of the *servus* (*Annales* 14.42.1).

Often, of course, slaves were the victims of sexual abuse—although little actual evidence exists testifying to such victimization, and none for its frequency. Consider the impact on slaves of the *lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis*, Augustus' legislation that sought to repress, by severe punishment, non-marital sexual relations between men and women. Although the actual text of the *lex Iulia* has not survived, modern scholars—since the initial studies of Esmein (1886) and Mommsen (1899, 691–2)—have uniformly assumed that respect for masters' unfettered authority over slaves precluded protection for *servae* and have concluded that “the evidence” that female slaves were not protected by this legislation “is clear and noncontroversial” (McGinn 1998, 196). In fact, much uncertainty pervades all efforts to reconstruct the original text of this law through the study of the fragments preserved in later Roman legal literature and through

logical conjecture concerning the likely original content of this statute. (Such literal reconstruction is in fact an impossibility, since we know from *Historia Augusta's Life of Aurelian* 49.4 that, over the centuries of its—at least theoretical—effectiveness, the *lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis* did not remain unchanged.) In any case, no surviving material deals explicitly with the applicability of this statute to unfree women living in the stable quasi-marital relationships previously described. While surviving juridical references do explicitly limit the law's application to free married women (*Dig.* 48.5.6 *principium*), this limitation did not apply to women living in *concubinatus* (48.5.35 [34] *pr.*). Such “concubinage,” although undefined in our surviving sources, is generally taken to be “a permanent, monogamous union of men and women not legally married” (Berger 1953, 402, *s.v.* *concubinatus*) and is explicitly assumed to involve unfree women, since “living with a free woman implies marriage, not concubinage” (Modestinus in *Dig.* 23.2.24). Since Roman law forbade third parties from unauthorized sexual interaction with slaves, which constituted an infringement on a master's property (*Dig.* 47.10.25 [Ulpian]; *Dig.* 47.2.83 [Paulus]), protection of slave women through this legislation—so far as it applies to men other than a *serva's* owner—would have comported with Roman values.

But what of the owners themselves? Plutarch, probably living in Greece during the late first and early second centuries ce and writing in Greek, famously advised dissolute masters to respect their wives by pursuing sexual relations with slaves (*Coniugalium praecepta* 140 B). But considerations of domestic tranquility, as Pedanius Secundus might attest, would have impelled masters toward self-control.

Of course, at Rome as in Athens, slave labor in brothels—with its attendant horrors—was commonplace (McGinn 2004, 55–77). Quantification, however, is impossible. Brothel keepers, for example, are often said to have been among “the most likely purchasers” for *vernae*, that is, girls born into slavery (Treggiari 1975, 400–1)—a “grim” fate for young women (Joshel 2010, 149). This conjecture of pervasive sales, however, is based primarily on the fact that three large tombs in Rome, believed to be burial places for slaves, contain approximately twice as many male corpses as female. From this, scholars have inferred that slave keepers preferred to maintain larger numbers of male than of female household servants and that, since birth was the primary source of unfree persons in the Roman Empire (Scheidel 1997, Harris 1999), large numbers of females must have been sold to third parties. Many other explanations may be proffered: these three gravesites may not be representative of gender proportions in Roman domestic establishments generally; a larger proportion of female infants may have been subjected to exposure and to the

resulting infanticide or adoption; young females may have been sold for other purposes; and so forth.

Guide to Further Reading

As with all other aspects of ancient sexuality, until late in the twentieth century ancient historians generally devoted slight (and largely superficial) attention to slaves' sexual lives. Before Hans Klees' chapter on "Slave 'Families' and Sexual Relations with Masters and Mistresses" (pp. 155–75 of Klees 1998), little consideration was given to issues of sexual exploitation in the prior 29 volumes that had appeared since 1950 in the German-language *Researches on Ancient Slavery* (Forschungen zur antiken Sklaverei), probably the fullest exegesis on various aspects of slavery in Greek and Rome civilization—and one least familiar to anglophone scholars. Better known in North America and the United Kingdom are the francophone works generated by the Groupe international de recherches sur l'esclavage dans l'antiquité (GIREA), which in recent years has increasingly engaged issues of servile sex. A guide to GIREA's publications can be viewed at http://ista.univ-fcomte.fr/girea/actu_GIREA.php. For Rome and its empire, the most influential works in English have been Bradley 1994 and 1987, which emphasize the slaves' harsh treatment and include brief allusions to their sexual abuse by masters (largely on the basis of Roman legal material). For Greece, Yvon Garlan offers a more balanced view, including a brief Foucauldian-influenced section on sexuality: see pages 152–3 of Garlan 1988. Recent syntheses on ancient slavery do pay more attention to the erotic situation of slaves: see Andreau and Descat 2006, with its focused consideration of slaves' *vie sexuelle* at pp. 164–5 (Greece) and 174–5 (Rome); and Joshel 2010, pp. 151–2. Slaves' sexual experience is the focus of Fisher 2010.

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Chapter 12

Sumposion

Sean Corner

Introduction

Much of our evidence for sexuality in ancient Greece stems from one particular setting: the *sumposion*—the Greek banquet. Much of the repertoire of ceramic vessels and of the imagery that decorated it were designed for the *sumposion*, and it is only on vessels for banqueting that we find scenes of courtship and lovemaking. Similarly, most erotic lyric poetry was composed for and performed at banquets (at least before the Hellenistic period). And of course one of Plato's two great erotic dialogues is set, not incidentally, at a *sumposion*. Athenaeus' (fl. c. 200 ce) *Deipnosophistae* (*Learned Banqueters*) is a dialogue set at a *sumposion*, in the tradition of Plato's or Xenophon's *Symposium*, but in this case the topic of the dialogue is itself banqueting. Athenaeus attempts an encyclopaedic collection of information on the subject from across the Greek literary tradition, including much erotic matter. Thus, for example, the material collected in Book 13 represents, together with symposiastic iconography, a large part of our evidence concerning courtesans. All this reflects the centrality of the *sumposion* as a locus for erotic discourse and activity, and indeed in Greek social and cultural life more broadly.

Strictly speaking, *sumposion* was the term not for the whole banquet but only for its second half: the drinking party that followed the meal proper, the *deipnon*. With hunger abated, wine, a substance of sociality rather than sustenance, took center stage. At the end of the *deipnon* a toast was drunk to the Agathos Daimon (a spirit of bounty and good fortune), the tables (each diner had his own individual table) were removed, and “second tables” brought in. A lustration, the

donning of garlands, the pouring of libations, and the singing of hymns marked the beginning of the *sumposion*, a ritualized drinking party under the auspices of the wine god, Dionysus. The wine was mixed with water in a krater—a mixing bowl. For the Greeks, to drink undiluted wine was dangerous and a practice of savages. Mixing was the mark of civilization, taking this potent intoxicant that might induce wildness, even madness, and taming it for human use, turning it to social ends. Symposiastic protocol prescribed that one should drink moderately: enough to overcome the individualistic reserve of sobriety and promote community and amicability, but not so much as might, conversely, foment strife and division (see, e.g., Athenaeus 2.35c–40d, 10.427f–32d).

The *sumposion* was an occasion for male homosociality. Citizen women were excluded. *Sumposia* were held in the *andrōn* of a house, meaning “the room of the men.” It was, particularly, the room for banqueting, but more broadly the “public” room in which a man would conduct business and entertain. There men outside the family could be received while the women of the household stayed apart. *Sumposia* were also held in public *andrōnes*, for the communal dining of civic magistrates, or in sanctuaries, and could be held indoors or out. Indoors, men would recline on couches in a circuit around the walls of the room, forming a circle of confraternity. Outdoors, they reclined on cushions or mattresses on the ground. Adolescents might accompany their fathers to *sumposia* as part of their transition from the world of the household to the world of men. Reclining marked that passage; until then, boys would sit. They might also serve. Wine pouring was a job for boys, free or slave (see Bremmer in Murray 1990).

The protocols of banqueting emphasized community and equality. The party was arranged in one undifferentiated circle around the common mixing bowl. Unity was maintained by the principle of circulation *epidexia*, “to the right,” as turns at toasting, game playing, speech making, and singing passed from one man to the next. As each man enjoyed an equal portion of food and wine, so each took his turn performing for the group. The emphasis on harmony was, however, concurrent with an ethic of competition. In every activity, each man tried to outdo his peers.

A striking characteristic of the speeches and songs symposiasts performed, as of the painting that decorated their drinking vessels, is their self-reflexivity. Symposiastic song and iconography often make the *sumposion* their subject. This imparts to symposiastic discourse a normative and prescriptive force, presenting to the banqueters negative and positive images of banqueting and interpreting for them the social and ethical meaning of their conviviality. This should, I

think, be seen as responding to a tension between individual and community that lies at the heart of the banquet. The *sumposion* was an occasion for the satisfaction of wants and desires and for indulgence in pleasure, but at the same time it required the individual to restrain himself in order to partake of common, convivial pleasure. Symposiastic discourse constantly inveighs against greed and immoderation and prescribes an ideal of temperance (a good example is Theognis 467–96). One should drink so much as to become more amicable, but not so much as to become aggressive and quarrelsome. One should engage in competitive sport, but emulation of one's peers should not descend into conflict and striving for superiority. One should regulate one's appetite so that all might share equally. Thus the rituals and protocols of the *sumposion* made of banqueting a sentimental education, particularly for the boys whose socialization in the *sumposion* was central to their initiation into adult male society.

It is in this context that we can understand the *sumposion's* place as a chief site for pederastic courtship. Initially a boy would attend *sumposia* under the watchful eyes of his father. Subject to his father's approval, however, he might be discreetly courted by a suitor (as Kallias courts Autolykos in Xenophon's *Symposium*), and so form sentimental bonds with and enter into the tutelage of a man outside his family. As he came into manhood and assumed his place in symposiastic society, he would become *erastēs* to his own *erōmenos*. Such courtship occurred before and in the midst of the group, being integral to its sociality and subject to its scrutiny. Propriety in pederasty required delicate negotiation: at stake, for both parties, were one's honor and manhood (see Chapter 7 in this volume). As with symposiastic sociality in general, the rituals and protocols of pederasty focused on the regulation of desire and on the ethics of self-mastery and reciprocity among free men. The problematics and proprieties of pederasty were concerned with how free men might at once preserve their masculine autonomy and yet fall under each other's sway, forging intimate bonds of mutual dependence.

Very different was the heterosexual eros of the *sumposion*, directed to the only women admitted: *hetairai* (courtesans), flute-girls, and other musiciennes who were hired to entertain by speech, song, dance, or sex. Slave boys, too, served as singers and dancers, and wine pourers were also objects of erotic attention, but it appears that at a *sumposion* the pederastic rule of discretion applied to slave as well as to free boys. Like boys, *hetairai* were a subject of erotic song and vase painting (Figure 12.1); but, in contrast to boys, who figure as objects of a sexually discreet, romantic, and ethically fraught love, they are often figured as objects of male sexual license, available for use (and abuse) and easy, transient pleasure. They may be depicted unclothed,

exposed to the group's gaze, and in explicit sex acts for common gratification (Figure 12.2). Typically they were slaves or former slaves (see McGinn's chapter in this volume on the debate concerning the status of prostitutes). Their exposure and availability stand in stark contrast to the absent wife, who was segregated from non-kin men and bound in exclusivity to her husband, for the production of legitimate children and in the partnership of family and household economy.

Figure 12.1 Kylix by the Brygos Painter (c. 490–480 bce).

Source: London E68. © The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 12.2 Kylix by the Pedieus Painter (c. 520–510 bce).

Source: Louvre G13. Réunion des Musées Nationaux / Art Resource, NY.



Tension and ambivalence were present in this aspect of the *sumposion* too, however. There was no clear or stable distinction between the erotic dancer or the musicienne who performed as a hired entertainer on the *andrōn* floor and the courtesan whose status as a prostitute was obfuscated by talk of gifts and who assumed her place on the couch, for erotic companionship and as a companion in sociality. In this capacity, rather than appearing as an objectified, servile woman, a *hetaira* could be treated as something of an honorary man, participating on quasi-equal terms. She might be brought as the exclusive companion of one of the guests (for the night, or possibly in a longer term relationship), and she might, like a boy, be an object of competitive courtship.

Sumposion and City

The *sumposion* arose in the archaic period (750–480 bce), along with the polis, and it is crucial to ask what relationship it had to the city. To speak in Aristotelian terms, the polis was at once an association of autonomous households under the mastery of the free adult male and a superordinate association of citizen-males who shared in common self-government. The household—*oikos*—was a partnership of husband and wife for economic and biological subsistence, for the production of wealth and children to perpetuate the patriline. To these ends a man governed his wife, children, and slaves. Master of his own land and product, the free man was not dependent on any other, but

governed himself. Still, despite an ideal of autarky, households were interdependent, forming at the local level village associations, which in turn came together in the association of the polis. If the polis was thus an association of households, it was at the same time an association of non-kin confraternities such as the phratry and the tribe, building bonds between households but also bringing men together in a community superordinate to the household and its private interests. In macrocosm, the polis was a community of non-kin men who shared the public sphere in the absence of their women, forming a society of free citizens who shared in the common weal. In this relationship, self-determination consisted in subordinating individual autonomy to the ruling and being ruled of collective self-government, in the common public interest. Thus, rather than political authority being centralized in a government separate from the citizenry, the polis as state was an association of citizens.

Commensality was integral to the polis at every level. In a world of associations, to belong was “to share” (*metechain*): to contribute and receive one's share and to participate in the whole. This was symbolized and practically instantiated in the apportionment and sharing of the feast. The life of the household and its relationship to other households were marked by feasting, at home or in the common space of the local sanctuary, in regular sociality with family friends or in celebration of special occasions such as betrothals and weddings. Though women's participation might be integral, the rule of segregation meant that, when men from outside the family were present, men and women celebrated apart, in homosocial fraternity and sorority. Women also feasted together at certain civic festivals. At the same time, in phratries, tribes, and the like, men dined apart from their women and outside their households, united in the sub-associations of the city by bonds of quasi-kinship, as “brothers” and “cousins” in citizenship. Male non-kin confraternity would also be enjoyed at the feasts of voluntary civic associations such as those of *orgeōnes*, *thiasoi*, and *eranoi* (religious clubs and mutual societies). *Sitēsis*, the common or public provision of food, took many forms. The collegiality of boards of magistrates was instantiated in commensality in civic dining rooms. The hall of the chief magistrates, the Prytaneion, housed the city's common hearth, making of the city a macrocosmic family, but a family of male civic *philia*, with civic officers and honored citizens or guests dining there. At festivals, citizens might receive meals or distributions of victuals donated by the city or by a particular citizen, in fulfilment of the liturgy of *hestiasis*. Citizens might celebrate the civic feast at home or might feast together at the sanctuary, in dining halls (*hestiatoria*), in tents, or outside. In some places, notably in Sparta and Crete, citizens were

obliged to have their meals not at home but in *sussitia*, “common messes,” as members of male commensal groups. Food and drink were provided either by member contributions or through public subsidy. Membership of the *sussitia* was a legal condition for citizenship, and these commensal groups may also have formed the basic units of military organization.

Where, then, does the *sumposion* fit in this network of commensality? The two leading scholars on the topic present contrasting views. For Oswyn Murray, the *sumposion* is defined as an occasion of exclusive, private confraternity, embodying elite corporatism, in contradistinction to the inclusive public community represented by the civic sacrificial feast. In the Homeric world, he argues, feasting provided the basis for the formation of *Männerbünde*, aristocratic warrior groups. In some parts of Greece, as aristocratic warfare gives way to the hoplite phalanx and aristocracy to the hoplite polis, such feasting is taken over and institutionalized in the polis through the incorporation of all citizens into state-run *sussitia* that form constituent units of the polis and phalanx. Elsewhere, while the polis does not go so far as to establish common messes, it appropriates aristocratic commensality for its civic officers, institutes public dining, and absorbs many forms of commensal association into itself, as civic associations. At the same time, a marginalized aristocracy seeks to maintain its class distinction through an exclusive lifestyle of elegance and conspicuous consumption focused on the exclusive sociality of the *sumposion*. Thus, while civic dining can take symposiastic form, public commensality now stands in opposition to the private *sumposia* of the elite. In this context, the heir of the *Männerbund* is not the civic *sussition* but the symposiastic club—the *hetaireia*—which rejects the polis in favor of a withdrawal into private pleasures or into the stasiotic politics of aristocratic faction.

Pauline Schmitt Pantel argues, however, that the oppositional categories of public and private are inappropriate for the aristocratic polis of early Greece, in which the common sphere (*koinon*) of the polis is constituted by a network of elite sociality involving integrally all the different occasions and forms of commensality—*sumposion* as much as civic feast. With the broadening of political participation, the city is no longer coextensive with aristocratic society and the political is increasingly separated from the social. The civic or public sphere becomes more autonomous and politics more abstracted from sociality, delimited to formal office holding and to the functions of government. This process, however, is slow, incremental, and only partial, inasmuch as the Greek state never becomes fully autonomous. If other associations are now subordinated to political association, civic life continues nonetheless to consist of the ensemble of common

activities of the groups that compose the city. While in the classical period (480–323 bce) elite symposiastic sociality could assume a private aspect, as being outside the state and inclusive of only a section of the citizenry, sociality is nevertheless not consigned to the sphere of private life and the line between civic dining and private commensality remains blurred.

Although the commensality of the Cretan mess differed somewhat from symposiastic banqueting (notably, diners sat rather than reclined), the Spartan *sussitia* appear very similar to the *sumposia* of other cities (see Murray in Slater 1991). Men reclined together in small groups, sharing equal portions at a banquet divided into two distinct stages of meal and drinking party. For all the idealizing of our sources, which tend to contrast Spartan austerity with banqueting elsewhere, it appears that *sussitia* too involved indulgence, especially in the pleasures of wine, albeit subject, as elsewhere, to convivial protocols of moderation and self-restraint. Convivial songs prescribed social and ethical norms, not least to adolescent boys for whom attendance at the banquet constituted an initiation into adult male, non-kin society. In both Crete and Sparta the *sussition* was one of the key venues for the pederasty that was intrinsic to adolescents' socialization (see Fisher 1988a and the works cited there in n. 37, p. 33).

The most ready explanation for the coincidence of form between *sussition* and *sumposion* is that symposiastic dining arose in Sparta as it did elsewhere in archaic Greece and was then, perhaps in the sixth century, taken over into the state. Thus, with conviviality as with other basic areas of Spartan social life, the identification of group sociality with civic community and its subordination to the larger association of the state were formally institutionalized. Elsewhere there was ambiguity, inasmuch as corporate sociality at a *sumposion* could remain outside the state and in some ways set citizens apart from one another, and yet might at the same time be rooted in the life of civic association (and, at times, fall under the regulation of the state, as for example when we read of laws restricting the number of guests at a *sumposion*: not in conflict with, but in support of, the “laws of the banquet”). I am, then, in agreement with Schmitt Pantel that the distinction between public banquet and private *sumposion* is not apt. One might say, with Murray, that symposiastic commensality in public dining halls represents a cooptation of the *sumposion* by the state and stands in contradistinction to private *sumposia*; but when one held a *sumposion* to celebrate a civic achievement, or celebrated a civic festival by throwing a *sumposion* at home, or, conversely, celebrated a family occasion by holding a *sumposion* at a civic sanctuary, were these private, as opposed to civic, feasts? Nor is it just

a question of place and occasion. Rather, even a *sumposion* exclusive to one's society, with one's friends, held in one's home, can be said to be implicated in civic community in certain fundamental respects, including its erotic culture.

It is Murray's view, however, that predominates, especially in English-language scholarship: as Leslie Kurke has put it, the *sumposion* was an elite "anti-city" (Kurke 1999, 17–18). Both *sussitia* and *sumposia* were anti-domestic institutions of male non-kin confraternity. In the case of the *sussitia*, this is interpreted in terms of civic association, but in the case of the *sumposion* it is said to have been intrinsic to the institution's supposedly anti-civic orientation. Our sources understand the function of the *sussitia* as being to detach a man from his family, from divisive household and class interest, and to attach him to his peers in civic community (Xenophon, *Constitution of the Lacedaemonians* 5, Ephoros at Strabo 10.4.16–21, Aristotle, *Politics* 1271^a and 1272^a, Plutarch, *Lycurgus* 10). The *sussition*, says one source, is organized as a "micro-polis" (Persaios at Athenaeus 4.140f). Civic concord is promoted not only in the equality of the common table, but also by a convivial ethic of temperance that checks the invidious zeal for wealth and status. The parenting of boys, who are translated from the home into this homosocial world, becomes the common charge of the group, and in particular of their lovers, and the boy is socialized in the *sussition's* "school of temperance" (Plutarch, *Lycurgus* 12.4).

Eva Stehle has emphasized the way in which the *sumposion* likewise constructed its convivial society in systematic contradistinction to the world of kinship, marriage, and the household. Pederasty substituted male homosocial love for the procreative bonds of domestic sexuality. A misogynistic discourse that affirmed the separation of the men from women, particularly wives, built bonds of homosocial comradeship over and against competing allegiances to household and kin. At the same time, erotic songs about boys and extra-marital sex with girls diffused masculine sexual competition in "an experience of collective masculine sexuality" (Stehle 1996, 253). According to Stehle, however, in being separated from the ties of marriage, the men were disconnected from "the ordinary relationships that bind men to the community" (233) and bound instead in exclusive loyalty to the *hetaireia*. In this she concurs with Murray, who views the *sumposion's* culture of pederastic romance and easy, extra-marital sex with objectified women as integral to the *sumposion's* creation of "an order separate from and outside the rules of the wider community, with its own alternative values" (Murray 1995, 231). Yet, as we have seen, if the polis was at one level an association of households, it was at the same time an association of

male citizens superordinate to the household. In fact, Murray places this at the center of his account of the polis as built not from kinship networks but from non-kin associations such as the *sussitia*. Thus it strikes a discordant note to read that in the polis, which was in so many ways a men's club, "women ...play the role of representatives of the community in its character as kin-networks" (Stehle 1996, 241).

That there could be tension between the commitments of symposiastic comradeship and broader citizenship does not mean that the *sumposion* was an anti-city. Rather, such tensions were inherent in the order of the polis as an association of associations. Competition, between groups as much as between individuals, was not only endemic in the polis, but actually essential to civic voluntarism and participatory self-government. Emulous rivalry was productive of *homonoia* (commonality and consensus). At the same time, competition could become destructive and divisive, productive of invidious distinction and civil conflict (*stasis*). The polis was an imagined community. Civic fellowship, in itself a rather abstract proposition, was built from the camaraderie of closer, more concrete associations. Yet corporate interests could be exclusive and particularist. Viewed in this context, it makes more sense to think of the difference between *sumposion* and *sussition* as one of degree rather than of opposites (private/exclusive/closed *sumposion* versus public/inclusive/open *sussition*: anti-city versus micro-city).

The *sussitia* may have been inclusive of all citizens, but each *sussition* had the aspect of a private club. Membership was selective, and some *sussitia* would have been more exclusive than others. For Murray, the anti-social, oligarchic secret societies of classical Athens epitomize the *sumposion*'s quality as a world unto itself, pledged in solidarity *contra mundum*. Yet the pledge of members of *sussitia* never to repeat outside what was said in the *sussition* (Plutarch, *Lycurgus* 12.5) has the same aspect, and indeed Plato (*Laws* 1.636A–C) warns that the danger of *sussitia* is that they can tend to *stasis*. Even in radically collectivist Sparta, then, sectional identities and interests among the *homoioi* (the "peers," as the Spartans called themselves) could not in practice be entirely elided; tensions remained between the city and the sub-associations that composed it. Conversely, even in classical Athens, which had the most socio-economically diverse citizenry among Greek cities, the cabalistic *hetaireia* represented an extreme. Thus Stehle recognizes that most *sumposia* were ad hoc dinner parties representing loose and fluid social networks rather than clubs, and she further recognizes that the symposiastic association as such did not define itself by opposition to the community and its values. Yet she goes on nevertheless to use the *hetaireia* as a model for all *sumposia*, on the grounds that any "symposium ...is by nature a

closed occasion" (1996, 217). It is from here that she goes on to read the *sumposion*'s anti-domestic orientation as setting it apart from, and in opposition to, the wider community. I would argue, however, that, while symposiastic sociality could be implicated in class tensions within the city, the confraternity of the *sumposion*, as of the *sussition*, remained embedded in the broader life and ethos of civic community.

In its male homosocial community the *sumposion*, like the *sussition*, was congruent with the order of civic community, not opposed to it. I have argued that symposiastic dining was likely never limited only to the elite. It certainly was not by the classical period, at least in many cities. Nevertheless, inasmuch as people typically socialized in their own milieu and in a style reflecting their socio-economic position, the *sumposion* was a vehicle for socio-economic distinction. The boundaries of citizenship in terms of socio-economic range, and the question of equitable distribution of shares among the citizenry across class, were contested in and between poleis, and this contestation was reflected in symposiastic discourse. Still, the symposiastic association did not represent an alternative, hierarchical order of social relations, at odds with that of the city. In contrast to the Roman banquet, for example, the *sumposion* did not admit of rank but was strictly egalitarian. As in the city, the anti-domestic, non-kin nature of the association de-emphasized familial lineage in favor of common masculinity and male camaraderie. Its distributive order mirrored the isonomic ideal of civic community: an order of common shares and equitable distribution "in the middle," to use the language common to symposiastic and civic discourse.

So too the convivial ethic mirrored the civic ethic in its regulatory order, inveighing against the greedy appetite for gain and surfeit (*pleonexia*, *kerdos*, and *koros*) that promoted invidious material distinction within the group of peers. Sharing in consumption set convivial sociality apart from the productive association of the household, but symposiastic norms emphasized moderation rather than conspicuous consumption. The proper symposiast, like the ideal citizen, is a free man, middling and measured (*mesos* and *metrios*), in contradistinction to both the pauper, who is governed by need and whose neediness makes him dependent and servile, and the hubristic rich man who, being a slave to desire, greedily and selfishly pursues his own wants and advances himself at the expense of his fellows. The symposiast shows himself to be a real man by his self-restraint, consuming moderately rather than being consumed by his passions as slaves and women are. They, not being able to govern themselves, are properly governed by others, but he masters his appetites and remains in control of himself. Symposiastic sociality thus conforms to the "middling" ethic that some scholars have identified as the hallmark of

civic culture in the polis. Rather than an anti-city, then, the *sumposion* is in this way, like the *sussition*, a “micro-city,” and indeed it is a trope of symposiastic song that the well-ordered city is like a well-ordered feast (e.g. Solon Fr. 4, Theognis 773–88). Just as the city promoted concord by identifying citizenship with the masculine autonomy shared by citizen-males as rulers of themselves and governors of their women and slaves, so the symposiastic in-group is constituted as a fellowship of free men.

Pederasty

Whether or not Greek pederasty had roots in prehistoric initiation rites (see Chapter 7 in this volume), “Greek love” as we know it arose in the archaic period together with the *sumposion*, as, I would argue, integral to the formative polis (rather than, as some argue, in reaction against it). For youths, the gymnasium and the *sumposion* (or *sussition*) provided a training in civic masculinity. Both were places of male homosocial leisure and sport and of the tempering of body and soul. Both, in their different ways, involved the disciplining of body, mind, and spirit in the context of competition and comradeship with one's peers, according to an ideal of masculine self-mastery. And both were venues for pederastic courtship that placed temperance at the heart of an initiation into the reciprocal and mutual relations of free, adult male society. Love between free males, so long as it was conducted properly, could be praised as the most virile form of love. Such love, according to the archaic symposiastic poet Theognis (1367–8), was to be praised in contrast with heterosexual love; for a boy, unlike a woman, offered reciprocity and loyal companionship. Eros, chief among desires, tended to excess, and excessive desire could turn competition into conflict and drive a man to seek his own gain at the expense of his fellows; but eros tempered forged the strongest bonds of masculine solidarity. Non-kin male camaraderie, if turned to faction, threatened the city, but friendship (*philia*), as Aristotle observes, also provided the model and the ground for the city, as an association of civic friendship. Pederasty, as a ground of male homosociality, was, as James Davidson has recently put it, “a bridge between the culture's structurally given gaps, between age-classes, between men who were not related, between ...families ...And it thereby helped to build a sense of a unified political society” (2007, 499–500).

Davidson prefers the term “Greek love” to “pederasty,” but I am not persuaded by his arguments that these were relations of

symmetrical “pair-bonding” rather than asymmetrical relationships between men (albeit normally young men) and boys, as has generally been thought (see Chapters 8 and 7 in this volume). Nor do I agree with his contention that Greek sexual ethics did not involve, as a structuring principle, a conceptual opposition between an active, penetrating subject and a passive, penetrated object, though I think this has been interpreted too reductively. That these were poles in the conceptual system is not to say that all relationships may be reduced to this binary. Likewise, while I remain convinced by the view that sexual roles were conceived in terms of political roles and civic relations of freedom and rule, these should not be seen as reducible simply to relationships of domination. The ethical system is built around the principle of the autonomy of the citizen-male (and not around the act of penetration, which arises as a second-order principle), but this admitted of more than relations between dominating subjects and dominated objects. Central to the ethical and political status of the citizen was his mastery of his own body, in contrast to the body of the slave, which was available for use, sexual and otherwise. Free women and boys, however, cannot simply be categorized, together with the slave, as objects of the citizen-male's sexual domination.

Free women's bodies, too, were protected as a function of their status in the city. Unable, according to the patriarchal ideology of the polis, to properly regulate her own body and its appetites, a woman fell under her husband's rule. His government as her guardian (*kurios*) and as guardian of his household, however, was not of the same kind as his mastery of his slaves. Her body was available for his use to beget legitimate children and perpetuate his patriline, but marriage was at the same time regarded as a partnership of “yoke mates.” Mutual erotic love was seen as the bond of marital union and of the household, and so as foundational for the city. Where the household, however, was regarded as an association of economic necessity, existing for subsistence, freedom was experienced in the voluntary association of civic community, in the political life of collective self-government shared in exclusively by citizen-males, outside of family and kinship. The masculine license of licit extra-marital sex with slaves and prostitutes was an expression of the man's liberty, not only in his use of their bodies to the ends of his sexual gratification, but also in being for the sake of pleasure rather than a reproductive necessity. Erotic relations with a free boy also belonged to the sphere of the voluntary, but, rather than the boy being an object of a man's sexual license, the relationship between man and boy was structured as one of free, mutual, and reciprocal rule, as fitting for relations between citizen-males.

Crucial to this is Michel Foucault's insight that being a subject in relation to others was indissoluble, in Greek ethics, from being a subject in relation to oneself: master of one's desires, and hence of one's actions. Masculine civic freedom consisted in practicing self-control in the exercise of one's liberty. A free man might enjoy the license of extra-marital sex for pleasure, but in this, as in other areas of his life, he should govern himself so as to act responsibly with respect to his obligations as master of his household and as citizen in the city: to respect his wife's priority in the home, to respect other citizens' wives and daughters, to moderate his spending on pleasures such as sex with prostitutes, to respect pederastic propriety in his courtship and love of a free boy. Building on the work of Kenneth Dover (1978), Foucault (1985) explains the rituals and protocols of pederasty as preserving and playing out the reciprocal freedom of man and boy. In their different ways, according to the asymmetry of roles, both partners regulate themselves and so maintain masculine self-mastery, and through their self-regulation the boy retains his autonomy in relation to the man. Moreover, asymmetry does not preclude mutuality, since reciprocal autonomy is a condition for establishing a relationship of masculine *philia*, of love and comradeship.

This bears expansion. Independence becomes a ground of mutuality only inasmuch as it admits interdependence. Interdependence requires reciprocal subordination inasmuch as one has to be willing to live not only for oneself but also for the other, in a shared life. Dover and Foucault have made clear how the boy experienced subordination to an older lover but at the same time retained his self-rule and chose freely to enter into the tutelage of the elder. He acted, in the ethical ideal, under the free rule of persuasion rather than under the force of any compulsion or necessity, whether on the part of the lover or of his own passion. Equally salient in symposiastic love poetry and erotic vase painting, however, are the subordination and dependence of the lover, though this is neglected by scholarship that sees Greek sexual roles in simple binary terms. Exceptionally among the roles that a free man might respectably play, the *erastēs* was represented, and represented himself, as a slave to love, subjected to its heavy yoke, pleading for his beloved's favor and made dependent on him (e.g. Ibycus Fr. 287, Anacreon Fr. 360, Theognis 1341–50). It is in this guise that the lover appears in the “up-and-down” posture in courtship scenes on vases (see Chapter 7 in this volume). In these, and in scenes of intercrural lovemaking, he may be the sexual protagonist, but his desire makes him a supplicant of his beloved. As with the relations of symposiastic homosociality in general, the tempering of self in pederasty was invested in cultivating

a sense of autonomy compatible with reciprocal dependence and bonds of mutuality, binding men in the mutual rule that Aristotle describes as the condition of free men bound in the shared life and common government of the city. Thus, in pederasty, the boy is initiated into adult male society not only by learning from his lover its values and practices, but through the very affective experience of the relationship, structured as it was as a lived lesson in relations between free men. Consequently the propositions that Greek pederasty was essentially sexual and essentially pedagogic are not mutually exclusive. Rather, the two are indissoluble, since the education provided by pederasty was, in key part, a sentimental one.

Prostitution

In stark contrast to the *erōmenos*, *hetairai* may be depicted in symposiastic poetry and vase painting as objects of sexual force and violence, open to common use for the symposiasts' shared pleasure, commodities for convivial consumption like the food and wine ([Figure 12.2](#)). They stand in contrast to the exclusive and productive sexuality of the absent wife, belonging to the anti-domestic world of male homosocial conviviality. Murray and Stehle, as we have seen, interpret this in terms of male homosocial bonding in sexual license that sets the group apart from the city. Yet *hetairai* also appear on vases and in literary sources as participants, quasi-comrades, in conviviality, and like the *erōmenos* may be objects of competitive courtship, fugitive and having to be won by persuasion (see, e.g., Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 3.11).

Unlike the prostitutes (*pornai*) of the street and brothel, these were women, outside of the family, with whom a man might have not only sex but also a social relationship, who could exercise agency in the social and erotic intercourse of the *sumposion*. Davidson has argued that *hetairai* cannot simply be categorized together with *pornai* according to a binary distinction between wives on the one hand and prostitutes on the other. The *pornē* as a commodity was an object in an impersonal transaction, openly available to anyone who could pay. In the case of the *hetaira*, however, the mystification of sex for pay as an exchange of gifts afforded her some agency and exclusivity; she might (to some extent) choose upon whom to confer her favors as participant in the friendly relations of a select social set.

Kurke, building on Davidson, argues that this opposition between *hetaira* and *pornē* corresponds to an opposition between *sumposion* and city. In contrast to Murray and Stehle, however, she argues that,

whereas the *pornē*, as a commonly available object of masculine sexual license, belongs to the order of the city, it is the mystification of the *hetaira's* status that is integral to the constitution of the *sumposion* as an anti-city. Her aspect as a quasi-comrade arises from her participation in an exclusive society founded on relations of private, elite reciprocity. Whereas in the city (and its brothels) the subordination of commonly available women promotes solidarity among citizen-males, the *hetaira's* status as a female companion underlines the social exclusivity of the *sumposion* as an association first and foremost of aristocrats—in contradistinction, regardless of gender, to commoners. Yet Kurke acknowledges the other aspect of the *hetaira*, as an objectified and dominated woman, much like the *pornē*. She attributes this to two factors: (1) the exposure of the *sumposion's* mystification in anti-elitist discourse; and (2) a tension in symposiastic ideology, which provides for in-group homosocial bonding by treating the *hetaira* as an objectified other, even as it provides for the separation of the group from wider society by treating her as a quasi-equal.

The contrast between grand courtesan and brothel prostitute was certainly implicated in class difference. As I have said, however, the fact that symposiastic sociality reflected class distinctions in the city does not make it an anti-city. The polis, even in the case of Sparta, did not seek to eliminate social inequality as much as to reconcile socio-economic difference to common citizenship. Difference, class difference above all, was always potentially divisive, but this was a tension inherent in the polis. The *hetaira*, belonging to a particular social network, might partake of its exclusivity (though we should remember that at least by the classical period *sumposia* were not exclusive to elite society and that not all *hetairai* were grand courtesans: more readily available flute-girls worked at *sumposia* as well as working the streets). Yet, as I would argue, her aspect not only as sex object, but also as quasi-comrade is a consequence of the order of homosocial confraternity common to *sumposion* and city.

Hetairai were treated (in representation and practice) as objects of common male sexual license. In this aspect, *hetairai* and *pornai* did constitute one category, as prostitutes, in contradistinction to the wife. The exclusivity of marriage was integral to the autonomy of the household and of the man as its governor, but in the brothel a man experienced the liberty of sex for pleasure, outside the productive bonds of marriage, as a common prerogative of masculine civic freedom. The *pornē's* body, commonly available for use, was a public amenity (see, e.g., Philemon Fr. 3, Xenarchos Fr. 4). The *hetaira* fulfilled this role in the *sumposion* (see, e.g., Isaeus 3.11–16; compare Alciphron, *Epistles* 3.22.1–2). There the enjoyment of extra-marital sex

was brought into the house, and the symposiasts in the *andrōn* were transported, in common consumption and convivial pleasure, out of the household and into the world of male homosociality.

The *hetaira* is categorically distinguished from the *pornē*, however, inasmuch as she participates in social relations, in contrast to the impersonal transactions of brothel and marketplace. But this did not, I think, set the *sumposion* against the city. The polis was not, after all, a liberal democracy. It was built, in terms both of social organization and ideology, on corporatism. For all that the openness of the brothel bore a civic aspect, citizenship was modelled not on the disembedded, individualistic relations of the marketplace but on the mutuality of friendship. A citizen-male might experience his civic autonomy in the license of the brothel, but he felt the ties of citizenship, of sharing in a commonwealth, in the life of the city's associations. The *hetaira* was promoted to a paradoxical reciprocity by virtue of her participation in homosocial conviviality. As a figure of unproductive eros and participant in the sociality of free men, she, in contrast to both wife and *pornē*, may become "her own mistress" (*autē hautēs kuria*: the legal position of a free *hetaira*) and a "female comrade" (which is what *hetaira* means). In this aspect, as honorary male, she can assume a role like the *erōmenos*, as a figure of romantic love.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to provide an account of the normative order of symposiastic conviviality; but of course reality rarely conforms to the ideal. The sources admit no doubt that the rule of moderation, whether in eating, drinking, sex, or speech, was by no means always observed. Competition among symposiasts could give rise to conflict, and symposiastic sociality could lead to anti-social disorder. The Greeks well knew that drunkenness was prone to riot and hubris. It should not be imagined that pederastic relationships could not be exploitative, or that pederastic propriety was always scrupulously adhered to. Indeed, a respectable relationship could always be suspected of belying dishonorable and unmanly relations of dependence and gain. The *hetaira's* equivocal status made her position always unstable, and rivalry for her favors, as for the favor of a boy, often strained, or broke, the bonds of friendship. The balance between responsibility to one's household and confraternity with one's peers could be difficult to strike. Spending on symposiastic pleasures might be the ruin of a household, and a man's commitments to his kin could set him against his comrades. So, too, a boy's suitor or lover and his

family could find themselves at odds. And convivial corporatism could itself be a source of tension. The *sumposion* identifies its interest with the interest of the city, but it could also be a basis for interest groups within the city. Ideally the different associations of the city are united in the larger civic association, but difference could turn to division and to contestation over the city. In troubled times, in a city descending into faction, micro-city might turn to revolutionary cabal.

The ethical ideals and social protocols that gave form to the *sumposion* existed precisely in the face of the tensions endemic to it. These tensions could only be negotiated, not dissolved, and the flip side of the symposiastic ideal is the reality that it contended with. Indeed, as I have said, the discourse of the *sumposion* was problematizing as much as it was idealizing. It did not merely offer prescriptions but gave force to those prescriptions by exposing what was at stake, reflecting on the problems that gave rise to them. Thus symposiastic song and painting dwell on the problems of trust, greed, and self-interest, they are stalked by the figure of the false friend, they confront the symposiasts with the effeminacy and servility of excess, they imagine the collapse of conviviality into disorder and conflict, and they lament *stasis* in the *sumposion* and in the city. Though this can take the form of earnest (albeit generic) moralizing, it often takes a form in keeping with the convivial spirit of wit and play. But this was serious play, with high stakes. At play were tensions that went to the heart of the *sumposion* and of the city as associations of free men: between individual and community, autonomy and interdependence, household and confraternity, corporation and civic association. By virtue of its very character as “micro-city,” the *sumposion* embodied the tensions inherent in the order of the citizen-state. By grasping this, it is possible to give an account of the *sumposion* that admits Schmitt Pantel's central insight of the implication of symposiastic association in civic community while at the same time accounting for its implication in differences and divisions within the polis, the aspect that Murray puts at the center of his picture. Such an account offers a new understanding of the *sumposion*, but also clarifies our understanding of the polis and the place, in its order, of such fundamental principles as class, gender, and sexuality.

Guide to Further Reading

Murray's account of the *sumposion* appeared in a series of articles beginning in the early 1980s, but is best summarized in his 1995 essay. His most recent views are represented in Murray 2009. Murray

1990 contains a seminal collection of essays by leading authorities. Other important collections on ancient dining include Murray and Tecuşan 1995, and Slater 1991. Schmitt Pantel 1992 presents a comprehensive treatment of commensality in the Greek city. Her essay in Murray 1990 summarizes her view of the *sumposion* in relation to Murray's. Davidson's most recent views are represented in his 2007 book, but his fullest treatment of the *sumposion* and its erotic culture is to be found in Davidson 1997. Kurke's view of the *sumposion* as an elitist anti-city is most fully detailed in her 1999 book. Stehle's treatment of the *sumposion* is contained in Chapter 5 of Stehle 1996. For Greek foodways, in practice and in the cultural imagination, see especially Dalby 1996 and Wilkins 2000. Fisher's series of articles (1988a, 1988b, 2001, 2008) represents an important study of the *sumposion* and sexuality in the life of Greek association. I have also listed here three articles of my own (Corner 2010, 2011, forthcoming), in which I set out my views in greater detail. For further bibliography on topics discussed in this essay—love and sex in poetry and vase painting; pederasty; prostitution; sexuality in the household; the debate over the dominance/penetration model of Greek sexuality—see the relevant chapters in this volume.

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Chapter 13

Sexuality in Greek and Roman Religion

Jennifer Larson

The existence of a dynamic relationship between human sexuality and natural fertility, by which ritual actions involving sexual themes can affect crops or livestock, is part of the ancient Mediterranean worldview. In this sense, true elements of “fertility religion” are present in many Greek and Roman cults, but to overemphasize fertility as the *raison d'être* for ritual is to ignore social, affective, and other aspects of a given cult. In the Greco-Roman world we can identify many points of intersection between sexuality and religion; some are related to fertility and others are concerned instead with sexual experience itself.

Thesmophoria and Bona Dea

The Greek cults of Demeter and Kore/Persephone provide one of the clearest examples of sexuality deployed in a religious context in order to promote fertility. In the festival known as the Thesmophoria, the matrons of Athens gathered to perform actions beneficial to the cereal crops, which included the handling of pastry genitals as well as ritual insults and banter of a sexual nature (*aischrologia*). Like the Eleusinian Mysteries, the Thesmophoria commemorated the rape of Demeter's daughter by Hades, her disappearance into the underworld, and her ultimate restoration. The mystery cult at Eleusis, open to both men and women, focused upon the grief and subsequent joy of Demeter, for Kore's descent and ascent are symbolic of death and resurrection.

In the all-female Thesmophoria, however, there is a further element of meaning in the sacrifice of piglets, which were tossed into

pits to decay until their remains were brought up again and mixed with the seed grain before the late fall sowing. Greek *choiros* ("piglet") also refers to the female genitals, and the piglets were deposited together with pastry representations of male genitals. Female genitals are again referenced in the Orphic version of the Demeter myth, when Baubo lifts her skirt and exposes herself to make the grief-stricken Demeter laugh. A group of figurines found in the Demeter sanctuary at Priene is thought to refer to the Baubo archetype; they depict a personified female belly and genitals equipped with face, arms, and legs (Olender 1990). In the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter* it is the servant Iambe who cheers Demeter, not by a gesture but by the joking banter (ll. 202–4: *paraskōptous*′) characteristic of Demeter's worship; Iambe was a personification of poetry composed in the iambic meter, a standard choice for poems with explicit sexual content.¹

In the Thesmophoria, then, we find the myth refocused upon Kore's descent, which is seen as a sexual union and followed by her ascent in the form of growth of the crops. As part of the ritual, matrons celebrate their procreative ability and temporarily enjoy special privileges, "running wild" in a way that arouses male suspicion. Their activities, however, are circumscribed by a rigorous exclusion of men, the use of antaphrodisiac measures, including a pre-festival period of abstinence, and the symbolic adoption of a primitive mode of life.

The December festival of the Roman goddess known as Bona Dea shares many features of the Thesmophoria: secrecy, segregation by gender, emphasis on participation of socially prominent married women, imitation of "ancient ways," and antaphrodisiacs (exclusion of Venus' plant, the myrtle) combined with behavior that is associated with sexual license (in this case, wine consumption). The festival, thought to be one of the earliest established at Rome, was supervised by the Vestal Virgins, whose presence guaranteed its purity and sanctity. The notorious infiltration of the all-female event by Clodius in 62 bce was a grave matter, for the rites were understood to be conducted "on behalf of the Roman people" (Cicero, *Letters to Atticus* 1.12.3; 1.13.3).

In the aetiological myths connected to the festival, the goddess is identified with one Fauna, a notably chaste wife or daughter of Faunus. Caught by her husband drinking forbidden wine (which was considered a stimulus to illicit sex), she is beaten to death with a myrtle branch, or, in the version where she is Faunus' daughter, she attempts in vain to fend off his incestuous advances.² These accounts of broken taboos and exemplary female chastity overcome through intoxication or force show that the cult was concerned with the regulation of women's sexual behavior. Juvenal's scurrilous depiction of the festival as orgiastic debauchery (*Satires* 6.314–5) is without

doubt a distortion; like Pentheus in Euripides' *Bacchae*, the Roman male persona speaking in Juvenal's satire insists that any secret meeting of women must be for the purpose of sexual immorality. On the other hand, the juxtaposition of dancing and wine consumption in the festival suggests that a period of license, within safely controlled boundaries, was central to its meaning.

In spite of the Bona Dea rite's similarity to the Thesmophoria, only a tenuous relation to agricultural fertility can be discerned in it (Versnel 1993, 235–60). Yet, like many Roman cults involving women, the rite is characterized by dual preoccupations with female chastity and social stratification; the sexual behavior of elite women is perceived as a barometer of the state's welfare. The ritual thus negotiates a hazardous middle ground between the recognition of the power of female sexuality and the need to restrain it.

The Phallus and the Vestal

The supernatural, protective power of the phallus was widely accepted in both Greek and Roman culture, though it loomed much larger (so to speak) among the Romans. The Greek Hermes was often worshiped in the form of a column equipped with head and erect genitals. These herms were placed outside homes and at crossroads, physically marking the boundaries that were under the god's protection. In Pompeii and other Roman cities, the phallus functioned as an independent object of power. It was carved over the doors and on the exterior walls of shops, engraved into paving stones, and hung in windows. Romans wore gold and coral phalli as amulets.

Again, the fertility paradigm falls short of explaining these phenomena, and no single origin may account for all the representations of the phallus in the material religion of the Greeks and Romans. Following Wickler (1967) and other scholars applying primate ethology to human behavior, Walter Burkert (1979) noted that male baboons display erections to ward off interlopers from the troop. On this oft-cited theory, the widespread use of phalli as boundary markers and for protection against the evil eye could have its roots in prehuman biology. But, while monkeys and other primates have been observed to use penile display as a method of sociosexual communication, there are as yet no studies strengthening Wickler's largely anecdotal observations (Dixson 1998, 152).

Greek Dionysiac ritual often involved phallus-shaped cult images and the carrying of phallus-topped poles in procession. Dionysos brings about luxurious growth in the plant world and an abundance of

life-giving fluids; his epiphany is attended by vines that grow to maturity in a single day and by miraculous flowings of wine, milk, and honey. Yet the preoccupation with the phallus in this case has less to do with fertility than with its symbolic power to express the ambiguity of the Dionysiac experience. The phallus acts independently of the will of its owner, which is why so many phalli are represented zoomorphically in Greco-Roman art, as though they were self-willed and independent creatures. While the phallus functions as the instrument through which a man asserts his willful desire and takes possession of another, he paradoxically has no control over it.³ Instead it becomes the means by which he himself is possessed and loses his self-control. This explains why Dionysos himself, the god who possesses his worshipers, is often represented as a phallus (Nilsson 1967, 2: 590–4; Csapo 1997) and why the boisterous satyrs of his retinue are often depicted on Greek vases as hypersexual creatures lacking in self-control.

At Rome the phallus had different cultic roles, which were more directly engaged with both protection and procreation. Varro says that the god Liber, whom the Romans identified with the Greek Dionysos, was celebrated through the display of a phallus on a cart (much as in the Greek world). Liber Pater was the deity who “freed” the man's seed during the act of procreation; matrons placed garlands on Liber's phallus in order to encourage conception. But Varro also interprets the phallus as a talisman that secures the growth of the crops and repels forces of bewitchment (*fascinatio*) from the fields (Varro, *Frr.* 93, 262 [Liber]; 151 [Mutunus] in Cardauns 1976).

The Greek cult of Priapus was introduced to Italy during the third century bce. The putative son of Aphrodite and Dionysos, Priapus sported an absurdly oversized penis, which alluded in different ways to each of his parents. His images stood in gardens, warding off intruders who might steal the produce. Priapus found an enthusiastic reception among the Romans, who already embraced the concept of the protective phallus and whose cultural aesthetics of the body was consistent with the idea that bigger was better (Williams 1999, 86–95). Priapus was syncretized with an earlier Roman deity known as Mutinus Titinus, whose name refers to the erect penis. This god, a favorite target of Christian polemic, presided over a nuptial rite intended to encourage pregnancy, in which the new bride was seated on the god's oversized member (Palmer 1974, 187–206).⁴

A distinctive Italian myth involves the conception of a child from a phallus or spark that appears on the hearth—for example Romulus (Plutarch, *Romulus* 2.3–5), Caeculus, founder of Praeneste (Servius on *Aeneid* 7.678), or the King Servius Tullius (Ovid, *Fasti* 6.627–36). The male generative power of fire is contained within the chaste female

hearth, and the two together are represented by the goddess Vesta. Thus, although the virginity of Vesta's priestesses while they were in office was an absolute requirement, their purity did not exclude interaction with the elemental forces of masculinity; in fact their duties involved the manipulation of ritual phalli such as the *fascinus populi Romani*, a talisman that helped ensure the safety of the state. According to Mary Beard's analysis (Beard 1995), the Vestals were "interstitial"; that is, they did not fall into any of the accepted social categories. Virginal like daughters, they possessed legal privileges reserved to adult men and wore a costume reminiscent of the bride. Their unique role set them apart from all others and made possible their sacred status.

Gods of Desire

Sexual desire was perceived by the ancients as a cosmic principle and personified in deities of primordial power, who cast their spell over helpless mortals. In Greek cosmogonic and philosophical writings, Aphrodite and Eros are among the oldest of the gods, and it is their advent that makes possible the generation of the cosmos.⁵ While Eros is an important figure in Hesiod's *Theogony*, the antiquity of the god's cult is a topic of scholarly debate. Pausanias (9.27.1) mentions the cult of Eros at Thespiae in Boeotia—a cult focused upon the veneration of an unworked stone—and says that it was present "from the beginning." While some scholars accept his testimony (e.g. Fasce 1977, 15–20), others trace the cult to the courtesan Phryne's dedication, in her hometown, of a celebrated statue of Eros by Praxiteles (Breitenberger 2007, 139–44).

In archaic Athens we hear of an altar of Eros dedicated at the entrance to the Academy by Charmos, who claimed to have instituted the god's worship in the city. Charmos was the lover (*erastēs*) of Hippias, who later became tyrant of Athens, and it was during the period of the Peisistratid tyrants that the values surrounding the twin cultural institutions of *sumposion* and pederastic love reached their acme.⁶ Within this culture, lauded by the character Pausanias in Plato's *Symposium* even as it was beginning to fade, Eros assumed the form of the *erōmenos*, the beautiful and beloved youth. Thus the myth and cult of Eros encompassed same-sex as well as heterosexual love. The god was often worshiped in conjunction with the principal deity of sexual desire, Aphrodite, whose domain included all the paraphernalia of female beauty.

At Paphos, Kythera, Corinth, Athens, and many other places,

Aphrodite was known as Urania (“heavenly”). For the Greeks, this best known of her titles evoked the Hesiodic story of the goddess' birth from the severed genitals of Uranus (“father sky”). They also associated the title with Aphrodite's putative eastern origins, perhaps because Ishtar/Astarte was known as the “Queen of Heaven” and was also a daughter of the sky god. Aphrodite Pandemos (“of all the people”) was another widespread cult title of the goddess. Plato's Pausanias (*Symposium* 180D–1C) differentiates Urania and Pandemos as two distinct goddesses, one being the celestial deity of “Platonic,” pederastic love and the other concerned with heterosexual and fleshly pleasures; each is provided with her own Eros. There is no evidence, however, to suggest that this distinction reflects cult practices or assumptions. The epithet Pandemos (*pandēmos*) had to do with Aphrodite's political function as a goddess who unites the citizens in harmony. The apocryphal story that Solon financed her temple through proceeds from state-sponsored brothels illustrates an unexpected but characteristically Greek link between *erōs* and politics: both are dependent on Peitho (Persuasion).⁷

Roman poets and artists portray the goddess Venus as an avatar of Greek Aphrodite, but she possessed a distinct character of her own. As a federal goddess of the Latins at Lavinium, her role as mother of Aeneas and protectress of the Trojans was an important factor in her cult from the start. Venus did not appear in the early festival calendar of Rome, lacked a *flamen* (*flamines* were the priests assigned to the oldest Roman deities), and her first temples there dated only to the third century bce. Her emergence in a Roman context involved a complex process of syncretism that, at least in the cultic sphere, filtered out much of Greek Aphrodite's frank engagement with the pleasures of sexuality.

Instead, the early cults of Venus were concerned to a surprising degree with the regulation of the sexual behavior of the city's *matronae*. The cult of Venus Verticordia, for example, founded in 204 bce with the dedication of a statue by Rome's most chaste matron, was intended to “turn the hearts” of the city's virgins and wives from wantonness to modesty (Ovid, *Fasti* 4.133–64; Valerius Maximus 8.15.12). Celebrated on April 1, it was grafted onto the older worship of Fortuna Virilis, in which women exposed their bodies in the men's baths and offered incense. With the introduction of Venus to the rite, the *matronae* were given the role of bathing and dressing her cult statue; presumably this was a dignified substitute for the more licentious existing practice, which was henceforth limited to the *humiliores* (Wiseman 2008, 140–54).

Writing in the first century bce, Lucretius (*De rerum natura* 1.1–28) transforms Greek epic and Presocratic conceptions of Aphrodite to

evoke Venus as a nurturing cosmic mother, through whom the principle of generation is expressed in all living things. This cosmic Venus, however, remains first and foremost the *Aeneadum genetrix*, mother of Aeneas and his race. Venus' career as the patroness of Sulla, Pompey, Caesar and Augustus reveals that this political role as a Roman tutelary goddess and benefactor of great men, quite distinct from Greek Aphrodite's function as a promoter of civic harmony, continued to be central to her worship (Schilling 1982, 84–5, 267–346).

Desiring Gods

In a fragment from Aeschylus' Danaid tetralogy, mutual sexual desire is the catalyst for a productive union of divine powers: “the sacred Sky desires to penetrate the Earth, and the Earth is possessed by the desire to enjoy marriage.”⁸ Beyond this elemental concept of the “sacred marriage” resulting in fertile abundance, however, the Greek gods are highly anthropomorphic and sexual beings; their desire for sex is taken for granted except in a few special cases: as the Homeric *Hymn to Aphrodite* (7–32) would have it, only Hestia, Artemis and Athena are immune to sexual desire. Consistent with her function as a goddess of sex, Aphrodite is herself sexually active in both myth and cult. Her adulterous union with Ares is recounted in the *Odyssey*, but in her worship as well she is often paired with a male deity conceived of as her consort, usually Ares or Hermes (Larson 2007, 116, 121–2). The sexual activity of deities may also help define the divine personae of these gods; their relationships with heroes, heroines, or other gods of the pantheon have psychological appeal for human worshipers, who are, after all, very much preoccupied with sexual thoughts and experiences in their daily lives.

One step beyond the psychological impact of narratives about sex between deities or beyond the perception of a deity's role in one's sex life is the erotic dimension of worship itself. This may take several forms: one group of examples involves an erotically charged relationship in which the worshiper's emotional and physical reactions to the deity's appearance or persona are central to the cultic experience. The mourning of the beautiful youth Adonis is a good example. The cult of Aphrodite's paramour Adonis had a special appeal for women, combining the erotic adoration of a beautiful youth with the emotional catharsis of lamentation for his death. In Greek literature, youthful, languorous, soft-skinned and long-haired males (of the physical type represented by Dionysos in Euripides' *Bacchae*)

were often perceived as the ones most desirable to women, and husbands held them under suspicion, as potential seducers. Whatever the perceptions of the women themselves may have been, this tradition continued to be culturally potent into the Christian period (Konstan 2002, 37–8).

The Adonis cult was an early import to Greece from the Levant, probably via Cyprus; but, while many of the outward forms remained the same, its cultural context and significance changed.⁹ Whereas Ishtar's consort Tammuz enjoyed a major state festival in Mesopotamia, the worship of Adonis was tolerated by many Greek city states but rarely gained the status of a state-sponsored cult. To perform the Adonia, which took place in late summer, Greek women ascended to the roof, where they sang dirges, cried out in grief, and tore their garments (Sappho, Fr. 140a Lobel–Page). A few days before the Athenian Adonia, garden herbs and cereals were sown in broken pots. These tender young plants were brought to the rooftops during the festival, as emblems of the youthful Adonis. In Alexandria, statues of Aphrodite and Adonis were placed together on a sumptuous nuptial couch, but on the next day the handsome “groom” was carried down to the sea, in a funeral procession (Theocritus, *Idylls* 15. 123–32). Under the Romans, the Aphrodite of Byblos (Astarte or Baalat) and her consort were reintroduced to the West by Phoenician migrants and in some cases syncretized with Isis and Osiris. The cult thus gained (or regained) cosmic and eschatological layers that appear to have been absent in its initial reception by the Greeks (Atallah 1966, 259–301; Turcan 1996, 143–8).

Sexuality and Ecstatic Experience

Another form of erotically charged relationship with the deity is religious ecstasy. Across cultures, ecstatic contact with a god or goddess is often compared to a marital or sexual relationship (Lewis 2003a, 37; 2003b, 51–6). The Greeks avoided such a direct and bald interpretation, but they acknowledged the erotic experience that is so often a byproduct of ecstatic states. That Dionysiac ecstasy had an erotic component seems to be a given and was one reason for the ambivalent attitudes toward Dionysiac religion attested in Greek sources. Whether women specifically experienced Dionysiac trance as an erotic encounter with the god, we simply do not know. The pious observer, as Euripides reveals in the *Bacchae* (314–18, 683–8), would

play down the possibility that *enthousiasmos* could lead to wantonness; instead, the erotic energies released in the ecstatic state would be expended chastely. For male devotees, surrender to the god is further problematized as a result of cultural anxieties about gender performance and power. Ultimately the experience of the male worshiper seems to be reconceptualized as an affirmation of male sexual vigor and aggressive phallicism, in which Dionysos himself may be visualized as the passive partner.¹⁰

Dionysiac ecstasy was associated with the alternative mental state induced by Meter “the Mother,” or Kybele, in part because both used rhythmic music and dance as a stimulus (Euripides, *Bacchae* 73–82; Strabo 10.3.13–15). Yet, in contrast to the phallic ambience of Bacchic cult, Kybele's worship is distinguished by the castration of her most enthusiastic male devotees. In Kybele's homeland of Asia Minor, the eunuchism of some (not all) of her priests was unremarkable, for other Anatolian goddesses, including Hecate at Lagina and Artemis at Ephesus, were also served by eunuchs (Bremmer 2008, 40). Among the classical Greeks, the mendicant habits of the Mother's servants, the *mētragurtai*, were more criticized than their gender ambiguity—if indeed these priests were eunuchs; for there is no unambiguous evidence for emasculate priests of Kybele until the late third/early second century bce (Roller 1997, 546–7; Lancellotti 2002, 97–8).

During the Hellenistic period, the sanctuary of Kybele at Pessinous was administered for the most part by the castrated priests known as *galli*, and Attis, their sacerdotal prototype, began to be portrayed as Kybele's consort as early as the fourth century bce. A hermaphroditic being named Agdistis appears in the Hellenistic cult myth as (indirect) progenitor, lover and antagonist of Attis. This being, castrated by the gods because of its wildness, became Kybele, and the almond tree that engendered Attis arose from its blood. Attis himself followed in the footsteps of Agdistis through his self-castration, which came after a disastrous attempt at heterosexual marriage. The *gallus*, then, emulated both Attis, the lover of Kybele/Agdistis, and the goddess herself, whose femininity was the result of castration.

The cult of Kybele (Magna Mater to the Romans) was imported to Rome with state sponsorship in 205/204 bce, but her spring festival, the Megalesia, and her priesthood were carefully regulated due to disapproval of the *galli* and concerns about the ecstatic nature and popularity of the cult. A grave relief shows that the *galli* at Rome adopted female modes of dress liberally embellished with small icons of Kybele and Attis (Beard, North, and Price 1998, 2: 211). Thus they utterly rejected masculinity in favor of a new gender identity, constructed in response to the ethos of the cult. Roman citizens were forbidden by law to choose this path of devotion, which was frowned

upon even for slaves. Elite Roman men of the republic and early empire were almost universally revolted, yet fascinated by this choice, and the *galli* were assimilated in their writings to the category of *cinaedi*, gender-deviant men thought to be morally depraved (e.g. Suetonius, *Augustus* 68, Juvenal, *Satires* 6.511–21). One exception is the moving Poem 63 by Catullus, in which the experience of the character Attis can be interpreted as a metaphor for the lover's self-destructive devotion to a sexually dominant and powerful woman (Wiseman 1985, 180–1; *contra*, Nauta 2004, 598–9).

The significance of castration in the cult almost certainly changed over time, as this practice was adopted by adherents with different cultural expectations. In the Anatolian milieu, where eunuchism was not considered deviant, it probably brought a dignified career of service in a sanctuary setting, whereas the same choice in a Greco-Roman context led to a counter-cultural lifestyle involving the dissolution of all former ties to community and family. Like the auto-laceration performed by Kybele's worshipers (as well as by those of Sabazios and Ma/Bellona), the self-castration of the *galli* was both a form of sacrifice and a demonstration that the goddess' ecstasy provided miraculous immunity to pain and access to divine powers.

Sexuality and the Mysteries

The example of the *galli* shows that, when a cult is transplanted to a new environment, we cannot assume that its deities, rituals, and symbols retain the same meanings or that the cult itself fulfills the same social functions. A deity such as Sabazios was a major god of the pantheon in his homeland of Thrace, but to many Greeks he was marginal and strange, the perfect foil on which to project their own fantasies of the Other. By the same token, exotic deities or those perceived to be exotic were the ideal vehicles for initiatory cults purporting to reveal secrets of the afterlife or other mystical paths to a blessed state. The mystery cults are largely the products of Greek and Roman culture, but many draw upon exotic iconography, rituals, and ideas to add to their appeal. The putative foreignness of most such cults, especially those involving ecstatic experiences, offered participants “permission” to experience temporary loss of inhibition and self-control, and then to return to the safety of “their own” cultural milieu. From a more xenophobic perspective, however, these cults were easy to indict as incitements to sexual immorality. The concern lay less with the use of sexual symbols that are so shocking to modern eyes than with the contravention of established social and

religious mores, particularly those embedded in gender roles.

There is a growing realization among scholars that some cults whose ecstatic and orgiastic features were attributed by the Greeks and Romans to exotic origins (typically in Thrace or Phrygia) in fact lacked these features in their original contexts. For example, the tympanon, the musical instrument symbolic of the ecstatic element in Kybele's worship, seems to have been absent from her iconography (and most likely from her worship) in its Phrygian setting (Roller 1999, 136–7, 144–51). Likewise one wonders whether the orgiastic rites of the Thracian goddess Kottytō, noted for exotic music and sexual debaucheries that included male transvestism and the use of glass phalli as drinking vessels, reflect anything of the cult in its original context.¹¹ Conversely, Dionysos was conceptualized as a foreigner from Thrace in order to explain the wild rites of his cult, but he is most likely Greek in origin and his ecstasies and mysteries are homegrown.

Several cults popular at Rome were looked upon with suspicion by our sources because their adherents were thought to be participating in sexual debauchery as part of the rituals. In the oft-cited case of the Bacchanalia—initiatory rites brutally suppressed in 186 bce—the Roman authorities seem to have been most concerned with the growth of the popular Bacchic organizations independently of state supervision and with the sway the cult leaders held over the initiates; the groups were accused not only of sexual depravity, but of poisoning and murder. In Livy's account (39.13.8–10), it was when nocturnal initiatory activities began to include both men and women that the trouble began; yet mixed gender participation in the Dionysiac cult was probably not as innovative as he claims. The real area of concern may have been the participation of men of the political class (Flower 2002; Schultz 2006, 85–92).

The accusations in this case follow a well-known pattern of propaganda used against new or “foreign” forms of worship and are probably highly exaggerated, if not altogether false.¹² Still, it is possible that the public licentiousness of the cult of Liber/Bacchus, which was celebrated throughout Italy with stage performances involving female nudity, gave credence to fears that the private initiations were even more debauched (Wiseman 2008, 122–7). And, given the fact that many cultures find in sexuality a pathway to transcendent experience, it is not inconceivable that some mystery cults included opportunities for sexual activity, or even ritualized sex acts. At Pompeii, for example, the decoration of a house-shrine of the Sabazios cult indicates a pronounced interest in erotic subjects, including Venus, Priapus, and ithyphallic dancers (Turcan 1996, 321–2).

The Scandal of Sacred Prostitution

Sacred prostitution is simply defined here as a sexual act performed for payment as part of a cult ritual. Like cannibalism and child sacrifice, it has functioned within Judeo-Christian cultures as a marker for that which is scandalous in the behavior of foreigners. Scholars increasingly label it a historiographical fiction without factual basis, in spite of a plethora of ancient testimonia from different cultures, times, and places (see for example the near-polemic of Beard and Henderson 1998; and, for the Near East, Assante 2003).

According to the traditional scholarship, the practice of “sacred prostitution” is attested in relation to the Near Eastern goddesses Ishtar and Asherah and originated as a fertility rite celebrating the goddess' domain of sexuality. On this view, certain categories of cult personnel associated with these goddesses functioned specifically as prostitutes, and sex with such a prostitute was a ritual act with religious significance. The vast textual evidence from cuneiform tablets reveals a large variety of female cultic personnel associated with goddesses (and previously identified as sacred prostitutes). Using an explicitly feminist approach to the evidence, Julia Assante and others have argued that the Akkadian term *harimtu*, long understood as meaning “prostitute,” in fact denotes an independent single woman. Similar arguments are made for other such categories of women who are mentioned in literary texts and in lexica used by Mesopotamian scribes (Assante 1998).

On the other hand, there is plenty of evidence that these women were associated with sexuality and perceived as sexually promiscuous. In cultures without coined money, they may be the closest analogues to the prostitutes and courtesans of later times. The *harimtu* is often a tavern worker or tavern owner, like Siduri, the so-called “alewife” of the Gilgamesh epic (Westenholz 1989, 262). The term *kezertu* in particular appears to denote concubine or mistress, while Shamhat, a personal name derived from the noun *shamhatu*, is the woman in the Gilgamesh epic (“Shamhat the *harimtu*”) who seduces Enkidu. The Erra epic (IV 52–3) refers to the *kezertu*, *shamhatu*, and *harimtu*, “whom Ishtar deprived of husbands and made her own.”¹³ Thus the women are consecrated or devoted to the goddess, and the terms used to name them denote sexual availability or seductiveness, but these facts taken together still fall short of the definition of sacred prostitution established above.

In the Hebrew Bible women and men known as *qedeshot/qedeshim*

(cognate with the Babylonian *qadishtu*) are cult functionaries in the Canaanite religion and are regularly equated with prostitutes; according to the sacred prostitution skeptics, this is the result of an Israelite rhetorical strategy that equates pagan religious practice with “whoring” rather than with actual acts of prostitution by the cult personnel (Westenholz 1989; Budin 2008, 23–5, 38–42). A key passage that cannot be satisfactorily explained this way, however, is *Genesis* 38, in which Tamar is described interchangeably as both prostitute and *qedesha*.

Therefore sexually promiscuous women, some of whom were undoubtedly prostitutes, had special cultic roles in relation to Ishtar and related goddesses. The old Babylonian/old Assyrian and biblical texts offer no unequivocal example of prostitutes whose sexual transactions were part of a ritual, and it is likely that our concept of a “sacred prostitute” simply does not correspond to the more nuanced and complex roles of Mesopotamian women in relation to their goddesses.

The scholarly perception of Near Eastern sources has been shaped by a disputed text from Herodotus (1.199), which states that the Babylonians expected every woman to perform a sexual service once during her life at the temple of the goddess Mylitta. Skeptics maintain that this account is fiction perpetuated in antiquity by a multitude of credulous authors. The apocryphal *Epistle of Jeremiah*, however, which differs from Herodotus' account enough to suggest independence, corroborates his description of the cordoning off of the women as a signal of their availability.¹⁴

The many reports of sacred prostitution for Aphrodite in the Greco-Roman world, and particularly in classical Corinth, have likewise been called into question, since they were assumed to derive directly from the cult of Ishtar. In the Greek cases, however, the evidence is different in nature, because at least some of the sources themselves indicate that women were expected to perform sexual acts for payment, under the sponsorship of the goddess. Furthermore, the emphasis is on the piety of individuals or groups who vow to dedicate women to Aphrodite for the purpose of prostitution. That is, the sacralized act is not sexual congress itself, but the fulfillment of a vow.

Athenaeus remarks (*Deipnosophistae* 13.573d) that it was the practice of individuals to “render” *hetairai* (courtesans) to Corinthian Aphrodite, in payment of vows when their prayers were fulfilled. An example was Xenophon, a citizen who vowed one hundred girls to the goddess in return for victory at the Olympic games. He commissioned Pindar to write a song (Fr. 122 Snell-Maehler) for the thanksgiving sacrifice, which was to be attended by the girls:

You girls who are hospitable to many, handmaidens of Persuasion in rich Corinth, you who burn gold tears of pale incense; often your thoughts fly up to Aphrodite Urania, the mother of Loves. She gave to you, girls, without blame, to pick the fruit of soft youth on beds of desire. With necessity, all is good ...

According to the sacred prostitution skeptics, Xenophon vowed that he would bring one hundred courtesans only to assist in the prayers held at his thanksgiving sacrifice, not to provide services to customers or to permanently attach the women to the sanctuary. Yet ancient vows normally involved the promise of material resources if the petition was successful.

Strabo reports (8.6.20) that both men and women dedicated sacred slaves, or hierodules, to the goddess, and that the sanctuary at one time owned more than a thousand of these courtesans, who were a major source of income. The geographer compares the activities at Corinth (described in the past tense, and thus not witnessed by him) to contemporary arrangements in his own hometown of Pontic Comana (12.3.36), where “there is a multitude of women who work with their bodies [*ergazomenōn apo tou sōmatos*], most of whom are sacred [*hierai*].” To suggest that these women were not prostitutes is special pleading. They may well have been slaves freed through sacral manumission, but it is as likely as not that they faced continuing obligations to the deity and/or to their former owner, and it is clear from Strabo's description and from his comparison with the situation at Corinth that they continued to be regarded as consecrated individuals in connection with this work.¹⁵

Thus, while there is no evidence demonstrating that women consecrated to Aphrodite performed *ritual* sex in exchange for payment to the sanctuaries, there is no reason to reject the possibility that temple slaves worked as prostitutes. One example of a brothel attached to a temple is attested in Ptolemaic Egypt; although the deity in question is unknown, it is clear that the proceeds were turned over to the sanctuary.¹⁶ Sanctuaries were often expected to be self-supporting, and their income usually derived from estates belonging to the resident deity, estates that might include slaves.

Conclusion

We have seen that “fertility” is pertinent to many cults that possess a sexual dimension, yet the concept of a “fertility cult” has limited explanatory power. Interpretation is difficult because sexual ideas and images are associated in ancient cultures with so many domains of

human experience. Sexuality enhanced the affective relations between worshiper and deity and was implicated in ecstatic experiences. Because sexual behavior, especially in women, was hedged about with restrictions, many rituals created a space for the temporary transgression of social controls. For certain individuals with special cultic roles, such as the Vestal Virgins or *galli*, gender ambiguity and sexual renunciation were important elements in the assumption of a new personal identity and sacred status. Like many other polytheistic traditions and in contrast with the monotheisms that would succeed them, both Greek and Roman religion acknowledged sexuality as a fundamental aspect of cosmology, divine behavior, and human experience.

Guide to Further Reading

For brevity's sake, I shall mention only those works not cited in the notes to this chapter. On the relation of the Thesmophoria to fertility, see Radek 2007, and for the ritual details, see Brumfield 1981, 74–103 and Parker 2005, 270–89. On *aischrologia*, see Brumfield 1996, and for an overview of women's rituals in Greece, see Goff 2004, 77–159. On the Bona Dea, see Boëls-Janssen 1993, 429–68, Staples 1998, 11–56, and Brouwer 1989 for primary sources. Olender 2001 is one of the few recent studies of Priapus; for extant phallic artifacts, consult Johns 1982, 61–75 and Ling 1990, 51–66. For a more recent formulation of the ethological theory of phallic display, see Eibl-Eibesfeldt 1989, 80–3. On the sexuality of the Vestals and its relation to the phallus, see Parker 2004. On the cult of Eros at Athens and its relationship to pederastic culture, see Shapiro 1989, 118–24; for Eros and Aphrodite at Thespieae, see Gutzwiller 2004. On Aphrodite, the work of Pirenne-Delforge (e.g. 1988, 1994) is indispensable; see also Rosenzweig 2004. On the cult of Kybele, see Borgeaud 2004, and for sources, see Vermaseren 1977–89. For a seminal work on Adonis, originally published in 1972, see Detienne 1994. On sexual elements in the mysteries, see Burkert 1987, 89–114. For recent summaries of the skeptics' position on sacred prostitution, see Pirenne-Delforge 2007 and Budin 2008.

Notes

- 1 Baubo: Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* 2.20–21.2; Arnobius,

Adversus nationes 5.25–6. Cf. Philochoros 328 F 1103 *FGrH* (Iambe).
Choiros: Henderson 1991, 60, 131–2.

2 Extreme chastity of Fauna: Tertullian, *Ad nationes* 2.9; Servius on *Aeneid* 8.314; Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 1.12.27. Forbidden wine and beating with myrtle: Plutarch, *Quaestiones Romanae* 20.268d; Arnobius, *Adversus nationes* 5.18. Seduction of daughter Fauna: Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 1.12.24.

3 For ancient complaints of impotence see e.g. Ovid, *Amores* 3.7.1–6; Petronius, *Satyricon* 126–8.

4 Brides: Arnobius, *Adversus nationes* 4.7; Lactantius, *Divinae institutiones* 1.20.30; Tertullian, *Ad nationes* 2.11, 2.17.

5 Eros: Hesiod, *Theogony* 120–2; Aristophanes, *Birds* 693–707 (parody of Eros' birth from an egg); Euripides, Fr. 758a Kannicht in *TGF* (Eros as *protogonos*, “firstborn”); Plato, *Symposium* 203B–C (Eros as offspring of Poros and Penia). Aphrodite as cosmic power: Empedocles Frr. 17, 22, 71, 86–7 Diels–Kranz; Euripides, Fr. 898 Kannicht in *TGF*; Plato, *Symposium* 180A–185C; Pirenne-Delforge 2007, 312–13.

6 Altar of Eros: Kleidemos 323 F 15 *FGrH*; Pausanias 1.30.1; compare Plutarch, *Solon* 1.7.

7 Solon: Philemon Fr. 3 Kassel–Austin; Nikandros 271 F 9 *FGrH*. Compare Pausanias 1.22.3.

8 Aeschylus Fr. 44 Radt. Compare Homer *Iliad* 14.298–351 (Zeus and Hera); Euripides Fr. 898 Kannicht in *TGrF* (heaven and earth); Lucretius, *De rerum natura* 1.251–3, 2.991–8; Virgil, *Georgics* 2.325–7 (father Aether and mother Earth); *Rig Veda* 1.89.4 (Dyaus Pitar and Privity, primordial deities of heaven and earth).

9 On Adonis and the details of his festivals, see Atallah 1966; Ribichini 1981; Reed 1995.

10 Csapo 1997, 276, 288. For myths depicting Dionysos as a passive partner: Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* 2.34.3 (Prosymnos); Scholiast on Lucian, *De dea Syria* 28 (Koroibos). For the myth, see Sergent 1986, 181–4.

11 Kottyto/Kotys: Horace, *Epodes* 17.56–7; Strabo 10.3.16 (in Thrace); Juvenal, *Satires* 2.91–8 with scholia; Storey 2003, 94–111. Because most of the later sources appear to derive from Eupolis' comedy *Baptai*, it is unclear whether the portrayal of debauched transvestism in the cult has a factual basis.

12 The locus classicus for propagandistic calumny against a new cult is Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 9.3–7 (on the depravity of the Christians).

13 Assante 2003, 65–82 describes the “strong sexual ambiance” of

the tavern, yet improbably holds that it was not a locus of prostitution. The Babylonian *Counsels of Wisdom* advises a man not to marry “a *harimtu* who has countless husbands, an *ishtaritu* who is dedicated to a deity, a *kulmashitu* whose favors (?) are many.” On this text, see Lambert 1992, 132–3.

14 For the accuracy of Herodotus' use of the name Mylitta (a Babylonian name for Ninlil/Ishtar), see Budin 2008, 91–2. Cordoning: *Epistle of Jeremiah* 6.42–3 (c. 300 bce).

15 The female temple slaves of Venus Erycina in Sicily may have functioned in a similar fashion. The sanctuary seems to have been known for its women (Diodorus Siculus 4.83), and the goddess was patroness of prostitutes (Ovid, *Fasti* 4.863–76). Neither passage is discussed by Budin 2008.

16 Lenger 1980, 111–17, no. 14, discussed by Pirenne-Delforge 1994, 120–1.

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Chapter 14

Sexuality in Greek and Roman Military Contexts

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We consider the experience of sexuality in Greek and Roman military contexts from the perspective of the male soldier: although this approach risks downplaying the erotic subjectivity of women and boys, who will be considered in their role as objects of the soldier's desire, the texts from ancient Greece and Rome overwhelmingly reflect the perspective of the adult male citizen.

At Home

Soldiers living at home are likely to have experienced the same patterns of sexual behavior as their civilian counterparts, with two possible exceptions. First, when soldiers lived among themselves, in barracks, they were likely to have had limited opportunities for sexual contact with their wives. Plutarch tells us that at Sparta soldiers lived in barracks until they were 30, and those who were married had to sneak away at night to visit their young wives for intercourse (Plu. *Lyc.* 15.3–5). He says that Lycurgus established this rule with a view to enhancing the fertility of the soldier and his wife: it meant that they came to intercourse “fertile in their bodies and always fresh in their desire for affection ...not sated and spent as a result of having intercourse without restraint” (15.5). Even if we do not credit the reason Plutarch gives for Lycurgus' legislation, it seems clear that married men would see less of their wives if they lived apart in barracks. There is no situation quite parallel at Rome. During the period 13 bce–197 ce, Roman soldiers were not permitted to contract legal marriages, though many entered into informal unions with

women and there is evidence, though difficult to interpret, suggesting that some such men may have cohabited with these “wives” in camp (Phang 2001, 124–9; more below).

Second, frequent absence from home for military service may have strained a man's sexual relationship with his wife. The sex strike initiated by the women of Athens in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, for example, which is designed to induce the men to end a war that had lasted several years already, dramatizes the interruption of marital intimacy experienced by husband and wife during the husband's annual campaigns abroad. Although Aristophanes focuses on the sexual frustrations of the male characters, he also shows that many of the women find it difficult to abstain (Ar. *Lys.* 728–80), though this may, in part, be a projection of male sexual desire onto the female characters designed to amuse his primarily (if not exclusively) male audience. Naturally Aristophanes ignores the fact that Athenian men had extra-marital sexual outlets (slaves, prostitutes, free-born boys); he does so in order to intensify the effect of the sex strike plot (Fowler 1996).

On Duty Abroad

While on service abroad, Greek and Roman soldiers had a number of possible sexual outlets: (1) wives and boyfriends; (2) personal slaves, male and female; (3) camp attendants, including prostitutes; (4) local women, girls, and boys; (5) other soldiers; and (6) captives. We discuss the final two categories, which raise special issues, in separate sections below.

Soldiers in antiquity rarely brought their wives on campaign. In the Roman Empire officers of senatorial and equestrian rank were permitted, at least on some occasions, to bring their wives along (Tac. *Ann.* 1.40–1, 2.55, 3.33). But rank-and-file Roman soldiers were different: though many entered into informal relationships with women, they certainly did not bring them along on the march, although those stationed more permanently in forts on the frontier may have cohabited with these “wives” in camp (see above). On the Greek side, there is some evidence that soldiers may have occasionally brought their boyfriends along on campaign. Xenophon tells us that the Spartan general Anaxibios, ambushed at Abydos by an Athenian force, “taking his shield from his shield bearer, died fighting on the spot. And his boyfriend [*paidika*] remained by his side, and about twelve of the Spartan harmosts, who had come from their cities, died fighting along with him” (Xen. *Hell.* 4.8.39). The status of this

“boyfriend” is not clear. He seems not to be a member of Anaxibios' army, for he, unlike Anaxibios and the twelve harmosts, is not described as fighting. He may not even have been a Spartan, but perhaps rather a local boy Anaxibios met during his long campaign in the Hellespont, or even a slave.

Slaves, both male and female, frequently accompanied soldiers on campaign. Given that slaves of both sexes were legitimate objects of a man's sexual desire, it is reasonable to suppose that these slaves were sometimes used sexually by their soldier-owners while on campaign. Many of the women with whom Roman soldiers entered into informal unions had formerly been their slaves (Phang 2001, 231–44). Roman soldiers also used their male slaves sexually (Phang 2001, 266–75): in Plautus' *Pseudolus* (1180–1), a slave is asked whether he received his soldier-owner's “sword” (*machaera*) into his own “scabbard” (*vagina*), when the two went on night watch together.

There were also other types of camp attendants, some of whom were legitimate objects of the soldier's desire. For Rome, we hear of *focariae*, either cooks or a class of women who had originally been cooks, who are mentioned as sexual companions of male soldiers (Phang 2001, 204–7). We also hear of the presence of prostitutes in both Greek and Roman armies. We are told by the historian Alexis of Samos (*FGrH* 4.299) that “Attic courtesans [*hetairai*] ...who had accompanied Pericles when he lay siege to Samos” (440 bce) set up a famous statue of Aphrodite, presumably paid for with their earnings. Evidence of prostitutes on campaign with Roman armies is more plentiful, but it is difficult to determine the extent of the practice. Scipio Aemilianus, during his campaign against Numantia in 134 bce, is said to have expelled 2,000 prostitutes from camp in order to restore discipline (*Periochae* to Livy, 57; Val. Max. 2.7.1). Perhaps most of these prostitutes were women, but it is likely that some prostitutes used by soldiers were male, as in the civilian sphere (Phang 2001, 275–7; see Val. Max. 6.1.10).

Soldiers also formed relationships with local women (and probably also with boys) whom they encountered on garrison duty far from home, especially during the Roman Empire, when soldiers were routinely stationed on the frontier for long periods—a situation that has little parallel among the Greeks. We have referred to the fact that Roman soldiers, during the first two centuries ce, were not permitted to enter into marriages officially recognized under Roman law, probably to promote loyalty to the unit by discouraging the formation of affective ties to wives and children (Phang 2001). And the policy seems to have succeeded in part: in tombstone commemorations from the western half of the empire during the principate, soldiers were commemorated by “wives” (partners in informal unions) or children

at a much lower rate than civilians were (Saller and Shaw 1984)—a gap more marked in Britain and the Germanies, where soldiers were not recruited locally, than in Africa, Spain, and the Danube, where they were, and a gap that narrows by the third century, when legions were more stationary and recruitment was increasingly local (Phang 2001, 404–9; Scheidel 2007, 419–21).

The vast majority of military “wives” who are mentioned on these tombstones bear Roman names, but we cannot tell which of these women are actual Roman citizens and which, probably the greater number, are “Romanized” provincials who have adopted Roman names (Cherry 1998, 100; Scheidel 2007, 423–4). Of those who are actual Roman citizens, many are probably the daughters of other soldiers (Wells 1997). But probably many of these “wives” with Roman names are in fact peregrines (see Horace, *Odes* 3.5.5–12; Livy 43.3; Tac. *Hist.* 3.34, 4.65). This must occasionally have caused tensions with the local male population, especially where the ratio between Roman soldiers and locals was high (Scheidel 2007, 425). Literary sources preserve little information about such tensions until the later Roman Empire, when soldiers were often billeted in people's homes: for that period, we hear of soldiers falling in love with the daughters of their hosts and having illicit sex with their hosts' servants, and even wives (Pollard 2000, 158; Phang 2001, 259–60).

Sex between Soldiers

To what extent did free-born soldiers turn to each other for sex? We find no clear evidence for “opportunistic” sexual relationships between Greek or Roman soldiers of similar age and status; the relationships described by our sources are almost exclusively age-differentiated. This is perhaps surprising, for the typical Greek or Roman soldier was usually at least 20 years of age,² which was about the age at which a young man ceased to be attractive to older males under the sexual protocols of both cultures.³ Thus the class of males old enough to serve in a Greek or Roman army and the class of males young enough to be the sexual object of another male ought to be mutually exclusive. The examples of age-differentiated same-sex attractions or of relationships that we do encounter seem to involve youths who are anomalous by virtue of being younger than the typical recruit or by virtue of still possessing, though chronologically adult, the physical charms of an adolescent. There is an additional reason why we would not expect many same-sex relationships within the ranks of the Roman army: most soldiers in regular units were free-

born males; while free-born adolescents were appropriate sexual objects for men in Greece, they were not in Rome (Williams 2010, 19, 130–6).

Greece

Greek authors tend to focus on situations in which pederastic eros might intersect with military service, even though the age of Greek soldiers would, as we have observed already, preclude most truly pederastic affairs. We naturally exclude from this discussion examples of pederastic desire for boys who are not members of the military unit, as in the case of the Spartan Anaxibios discussed earlier, and instances in which former lovers and their beloveds, who are no longer involved in an active romantic relationship, serve together on campaign, likely the situation of Socrates and Alcibiades, who served together at Potidaea and again later at Delium.⁴

We encounter two interesting cases of pederastic eros in military contexts in Xenophon's *Anabasis*. We hear of an Olynthian soldier named Episthenes, a “lover of boys” (*paiderastēs*), who, when he saw that a Thracian commander was about to execute a beautiful young light-armed soldier just on the cusp of maturity (*arti hēbaskonta*), asked Xenophon to intervene on the boy's behalf. Xenophon responded by telling the Thracian about Episthenes' “inclination” (*tropos*), illustrated by the fact that he (Episthenes) once “formed a battalion considering nothing other than whether [the candidates] were beautiful” (Xen. *An.* 7.4.7–8). It is possible that the young Thracian soldier, described as a “boy” (*pais*), was still in his teens, in which case we might conclude that soldiers could be somewhat younger in Thrace than they were in Athens, particularly in an irregular force such as this. It is also possible that he was in his early 20s, but had the physical appearance of a late adolescent, which made him attractive to a soldier like Episthenes, but not necessarily acceptable as a sexual object. Likewise, the fact that Episthenes once assembled a band of soldiers chosen for their beauty does not mean that he had a sexual relationship with any of these soldiers, but only that some recruits could still appear just boyish enough to be attractive to other soldiers who were, as Xenophon describes Episthenes, particularly fond of boys.

Xenophon takes a dimmer view of the erotic manipulations of Meno, one of the commanders of the Ten Thousand who marched with Cyrus:

being still in the bloom of youthful beauty [*hōraios*], he acquired from Aristippos the right to command foreign troops; he was a close

associate of Ariaaios, a barbarian, because the latter enjoyed the company of handsome youths; and he used to have as his boyfriend [*paidika*] one Tharypas, though he himself was beardless and Tharypas had a beard. (Xen. *An.* 2.6.28)

Xenophon implies that Meno used his youthful attractiveness to persuade Aristippos to grant him a command and to insinuate himself into the circle of Ariaaios. He seems to find no fault with Aristippos or Ariaaios for succumbing to the charms of this handsome youth, any more than he did with Episthenes; his concern is rather with the young Meno's meretricious efforts to gain military status that he did not deserve. Xenophon's claim about Meno's relationship with Tharypas, meanwhile, has nothing to do with Meno's military service with the Ten Thousand: he mentions it because it constitutes one more example of how Meno's erotic life disrupts socio-political hierarchies.

Some Greek writers went so far as to claim that pederastic attachments should be actively encouraged in military units, on the grounds that soldiers would fight more bravely if their beloveds were present to witness their conduct (Pl. *Smp.* 178D–9B; Xen. *Smp.* 4.15–16, 8.32–4; *AP* 13.22.5–8). Tradition has it that this principle was implemented in the Sacred Band of Thebes, a battalion active for about fifty years in the middle of the fourth century bce, which was allegedly composed of 150 pairs of lovers and their beloveds. But this detail is attested only in moralizing texts such as Xenophon's *Symposium* (8.34) and Plutarch's *Pelopidas* (18–19) and is notably absent in historiographic texts that cover the Theban hegemony of the fourth century, such as Xenophon's own *Hellenica*; and it has been suggested that the tradition of an erotic Sacred Band was not based on a historical reality, but originated as a utopian political fantasy within the Socratic circle in the early fourth century (Leitao 2002). Indeed, a large number of the passages that have been collected by scholars to show that same-sex eroticism was widespread in Greek armies (see, e.g., Ogden 1996; Davidson 2007, 313–482) comes from the passage in Plutarch's *Pelopidas* that introduces the Sacred Band and from a speech by the advocate for male love in Plutarch's *Amatorius*—all of it material tendentiously molded to show that same-sex love is consistent (after all) with that most masculine of arenas, war. Even if the Theban band was composed of pairs of lovers and beloveds, it is quite possible that these relationships were no longer actively sexual; one would presumably be no less motivated to fight bravely in that case.

In contrast to these hints of pederastic eros in Greek military contexts, there is no reliable evidence of sex between soldiers explicitly identified as adults (even adults different in age). There is a passage from an unknown play by Euboulos describing the privations

the Greek soldiers faced at Troy: “Nor did any of them see a single courtesan, but they kneaded themselves [i.e., masturbated] for ten years. Bitter was the military service they saw: they took one city but left wider assed [*euruprōktoteroi*] than the city they took” (Fr. 118 PCG). The adjective *euruprōktoteroi* clearly implies that the soldiers engaged in anal intercourse with each other. There is also Theopompos’ claim that Philip’s Royal Companions allowed themselves to be sodomized by each other “even though they had beards”: one ought, he says, to refer to them “not as soldiers but as prostitutes” (FGrH 115 F 225a). But the usefulness of these two texts is limited: the former is a fantasy from comedy, the latter a transparent attempt to discredit Macedon.

There is one other possible case that we might pause over briefly: the friendship between Homer’s Achilles and Patroklos, who were both adults, though Patroklos was clearly somewhat older (*Il.* 11.786–7). A number of scholars have argued that the feeling between the two men went beyond mere friendship to “love,” and some have even suggested that it was a sexual relationship, but one not represented explicitly in deference to supposed epic reticence (Clarke 1978). But I am not convinced that this was a sexual relationship in Homer (the two are depicted sleeping with female captives, but never with each other; but cf. *Il.* 24.130–1) and would suggest that the Homeric account is perhaps more powerful for being about two men deeply attached to each other in the absence of the obvious rewards of physical sex. The friendship of Achilles and Patroklos was reinterpreted as a pederastic sexual relationship later on, as early as in Aeschylus’ *Myrmidons* (Frr. 135–7 Radt), but the grief-stricken Achilles’ references in that play to “kisses” and “the intimacy of your thighs” could be reminiscences of an earlier stage of their relationship, before they sailed to Troy.

We should not give too much weight to the apparent absence of evidence for sex between adult soldiers on campaign. Given that affairs or fleeting sexual encounters between adults were non-normative, they were likely to have been kept quiet. This may also explain the relative dearth of evidence for pederastic affairs: while the love of boys was tolerated and in some circles valorized, the youngest members of Greek hoplite forces were probably thought of as socially adult, even if some of them had not yet reached full physiological maturity.

Rome

Because the Romans did not tolerate the use of free-born youths as sexual objects, the Roman soldier had no permissible sexual outlets

within the army's own ranks. This may explain much of the difference between Greek and Roman texts on the subject of same-sex eroticism within military units. Whereas Greek authors explore the natural manifestations of pederastic attractions in military contexts and some even speculate about its salutary effects, what we encounter in Roman texts is anxiety about the bodily integrity of any soldier, particularly the young one, who is made the sexual object of another and about the deleterious consequences of this for military readiness.

Polybius, describing the republican army of the second century bce, tells us that a Roman soldier could be cudged to death by his commander and fellow soldiers if he stole army property, committed perjury, or “if one of the young men was discovered to have misused [*parachrēsamenos*] his body” (6.37.9). The word *parachrēsamenos* is likely a reference to soldiers who willingly played the passive role sexually (Phang 2001, 282–3); and because the other infractions Polybius mentions are imagined to take place within the confines of army service, it is likely that this punishment for playing the passive sexual role with another man also applied only if the act took place within the context of military service.

The rationale for the regulation described by Polybius seems to have been that a man who made his body vulnerable to the sexual pleasure of another was likely to be vulnerable to the enemy on the battlefield (see Walters 1997). Livy provides a clear statement of this idea in his account of the suppression of the Bacchanalian cult in the early second century bce. In a speech that was supposed to have been delivered at the height of the crisis before a popular assembly, the speaker, reminding his audience of the rumor that free-born youths were sodomized as part of the initiation ritual (see 39.13.14), exclaims:

Romans, do you think that young men [*iuvenes*] who are initiated by means of this ritual can be made into soldiers? ... Can these [young men], covered with their own disgrace [*stupris*] and that of others, fight with the sword to protect the sexual integrity [*pudicitia*] of your wives and children? (Livy 39.15.13–14)

Polybius provides the only evidence we have for the existence of formal penalties against soldiers who played the passive role sexually. But there is plenty of other evidence that the Romans were anxious that a soldier who engaged in this behavior at any time, even while off duty or when he was much younger, would be unsuitable as a soldier. The fabulist Phaedrus tells the story of a soldier in Pompey's army who had a body impressive in size, but who “had acquired, by speaking with a feeble voice and walking softly, a persistent reputation for being a pathic [*cinaedus*]” (Appendix 10.2–3 Perotti).⁵

As a result, Pompey refused to believe that this soldier was the man who had robbed his baggage train and he initially refused to let him represent the army in a duel with the enemy. But when the soldier was finally permitted to fight, he fought bravely and succeeded in killing the enemy, and Pompey even honored him with a crown. A similar paradox lies at the heart of Suetonius' story about two officers who participated in a conspiracy against Domitian. The emperor ordered the execution of all the conspirators except these two, "who, in order to more easily show that they were free from blame, passed themselves off as pathics [*se ...impudicos probaverant*] and thus unable to be of any influence with their commander or the [other] soldiers" (Suet. *Dom.* 10; cf. Cassius Dio 67.11.4). The assumption at the core of both these stories is that a pathic (*cinaedus* or *impudicus*) is incapable of manly conduct.

Some scholars believe that these anecdotes, even if not necessarily historical, imply that men who played the passive role sexually with another male could and did serve in the army (Richlin 1993, 540; Williams 2010, 213, 216). But we must be cautious. Suetonius, for instance, implies that the two conspirators against Domitian falsely claimed to be pathics solely in order to avoid execution; presumably whatever legal or social consequences they might incur as admitted *impudici* were milder.⁶ Similarly, the *miles Pompeianus* had the "reputation" (*fama*) of being a pathic, but his brave conduct in battle seems to belie his appearance. The internal logic of both tales suggests that sexual passivity is inconsistent with a martial constitution: these men would, if real pathics, be the exceptions that prove the rule.

This Roman concern with the inviolability of the soldier's body is manifested somewhat differently in stories of officers who attempt to have sex with younger soldiers under their command. Though the moral focus in these stories is on the active partner, the primary concern remains the extent to which his conduct could undermine the effectiveness in battle of his partner and of the unit as a whole. Valerius Maximus tells the story of a centurion named Gaius Laetorius Mergus, who made sexual advances on his adjutant (*cornicularius*) while on campaign during the Samnite Wars. When Mergus was summoned by a tribune of the plebs for a civilian trial on a charge of *stuprum*, the unlawful sexual advance on a free-born boy, he fled and committed suicide. Valerius is less concerned with the civilian crime with which Mergus was charged than with the effect of his act on the effectiveness of his unit: "The military standards, the sacred eagles, and the most reliable custodian of Roman power, the severe discipline of the army camps, hounded him to the underworld, because he who ought to have been the adjutant's trainer tried to be corruptor of his integrity [*sanctitatis*]" (Val. Max. 6.1.11; cf. Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.*

Similar is the story of the *miles Marianus*, which was a staple of Roman rhetoric during the late republic and the principate (Cic. *Mil.* 9, *Inv. rhet.* 2.124; Val. Max. 6.1.12; Quint. *Inst.* 3.11.14; [Quint.] *Decl. ma.* 3; Plu. *Mar.* 14.4–8; Calp. Fl. 3). Gaius Lusius, a military tribune in Marius' army during his campaign against the Cimbri and Marius' own nephew, attempted to force himself sexually on a younger soldier. The soldier responded by killing Lusius, and Marius declared the homicide justifiable. Most accounts present this as another case of *stuprum*, a sexual assault on a free-born male. But Calpurnius Flaccus, in his declamation on the theme, focuses not on the free-born status of the youth, but on his age: “Is he not yet a man in your eyes, he who is already a soldier for Marius?” (3.11–12). Calpurnius seems to have put his finger on an awkward reality of military life: some soldiers, though old enough to serve in the army, may nevertheless still have possessed the youthful beauty of an adolescent, which may have proved irresistible to some older soldiers who were willing to risk legal sanctions to pursue him. But, for Calpurnius, a soldier, no matter how young or youthful, must be treated as a man.

What do these anecdotes tell us about the extent and nature of sex between soldiers in the Roman army? The rules are the same as in civilian life (especially those that protect the integrity of a free-born male), except that there is an additional concern with how certain kinds of sexual behavior might affect unit effectiveness. Now it may be that this was a real problem in the Roman army, and some scholars have argued that the military may have condoned it (Phang 2001, 291). But what these cases also suggest is that “opportunistic homosexuality” was likely to take certain culturally recognizable forms: in the case of the Roman army, this would be sex between soldiers of different status rather than between men of the same age and/or status. This is not to say that men of the same age might not have occasionally engaged in sexual relationships with each other during a long campaign, or while on frontier duty. But this behavior, when it happened, was probably less likely to be recorded, precisely because it could not be understood in terms of the power protocols that structured normative Roman sexuality.

Captives

Rape has been one of the concomitants of war for as long as humans have fought wars. Greece and Rome were no different. But what form did this most violent expression of human sexuality take? In both

Greece and Rome it was common for victorious soldiers to take captured women and children as slaves; and one of the privileges of the Greco-Roman slave-owner was the capacity to use his slaves sexually, provided he comported himself sexually in a way befitting his socio-political role. But the sexual use of war captives was not always condoned. In this section we will consider some of the ways in which the Greeks and Romans problematized this practice.

Greece

We encounter references in Greek texts to the sexual use of women captured in war from the time of Homer onward. The *Iliad* begins with the return of Agamemnon's captive Chryseis to appease an angry Apollo and ends with hints of a captive fate for the women of Troy, which is dramatized more fully later in Euripides' *Andromache*, *Hecuba*, and *Trojan Women*. The Greeks seem to have accepted such a fate for women as a part of war. They sometimes depict the women themselves as not only resigned to their new status, but even feeling affection for their new masters: such is the case of Briseis in the *Iliad* (19.282–300) and of a number of Trojan captives in Euripidean tragedy (Scodel 1998); similarly, in the *Anabasis* Xenophon describes how women captured by the Cyreans in the Mesopotamian plain join their new masters in raising the war cry when the men fight the mountain people of neighboring Cardouchia (Xen. *An.* 4.3.19; compare 3.2.25, 5.4.33; also see Lee 2004). Greek authors express outrage at the sexual use of captives only when the captors are barbarians or tyrants and their conduct is, accordingly, violent.

We find two good examples in Herodotus. In 494 bce, after the suppression of the Ionian revolt, the Persians “chose [from the cities of Ionia] the most beautiful boys and castrated them and made them eunuchs and no longer intact, and they dragged away the most beautiful maidens to the king,” and the cities themselves and all their temples were burned to the ground (Hdt. 6.32). Herodotus does not mention a fact that would be assumed by every Greek reader: the adult men were killed or possibly sold into slavery, and the women and other children were sold into slavery. His concern is not with these others, who suffered the fates of all those vanquished in war, but with a special category of captives, who were treated in a way unheard of among Greeks: when he says that the girls were brought to the king, he means that they were to enter the king's harem, and the boys, who were made eunuchs, would guard this very harem. The Persians' outrage does not consist in enslaving vanquished Ionians but in subjecting some of them—the flower of Ionian youth—to that most

distasteful of eastern sexual institutions. Herodotus reports another case of sexual mistreatment in the context of the Persian capture of Phokis: “they captured ...some women whom they raped repeatedly [*misgomenoi hupo plētheos*] and thus caused to die” (Hdt. 8.33). The problem is not that these captive women are used sexually, but that they are violently mistreated at the hands of barbarians.

Two examples from Diodorus conform to the same pattern. The women of Selinous, after the city was captured by the Carthaginians in 409 bce, “spent the night subject to the sexual mistreatment [*en hubrei*] of the enemy ...and some of them were forced to watch their marriageable daughters suffer things not appropriate to their age” (Diod. Sic. 13.58.1). And among the other atrocities committed by Diegylis, king of Thrace, in his war against Attalos II of Pergamum, were sexual crimes perpetrated on some of the latter's subjects, who were held as hostages by the Thracians: “it was possible to see not a few of the women with their bodies spread-eagled, set out for sexual mistreatment in addition to the misfortune of death, and forced to endure disgraceful positions of every sort dreamed up by the arrogance of barbarians.” Here the violence of the barbarian king is explicitly contrasted with Attalos' humane treatment of the Thracians he had captured (Diod. Sic. 33.15.1–2).

The Greeks deplored the sexual mistreatment of captives not only as part of a strategy to dehumanize the barbarian “other,” but also in order to score rhetorical points in domestic politics. Demosthenes, in his speech *On the False Embassy*, invokes the sexual mistreatment of women captured by Philip during the sack of Olynthos on two separate occasions in order to stir up resentment against the defendant Aeschines. The first is when he describes a *sumposion* that Aeschines and others had attended in Pella on an earlier embassy to Philip. The host brought out a beautiful Olynthian woman, free-born but now a slave, to entertain his guests. Once the drinking was well underway, Aeschines and Phrynon demanded that the woman sing. When she refused, they became angry, saying that “it is outrageous ...for a war captive to put on airs [*truphan*],” and had a slave strip her and administer a whipping (Dem. 19.196–8). Later in the speech, Demosthenes claims that, even though Aeschines was himself disgusted upon encountering a certain Atrestidas—an Arcadian friend of Philip's who had received captive Olynthian women and children from him (19.305)—Aeschines “condoned the same conduct in Philocrates, who brought free-born Olynthian women here [*sc. at Athens*] for sexual mistreatment [*eph' hubrei*]” (Dem. 19.309). The charges against Aeschines are tenuous: Aeschines himself claims the story of the Macedonian symposium is a fabrication on Demosthenes' part (Aeschin. 2.153; see also 2.4), and it is likely that many on the

jury did not believe the charge either, judging from their clamorous interruption of Demosthenes at this point in the speech; and it is difficult to see how Philocrates' traffic in Olynthian captives could reflect badly on Aeschines. What is important is not Aeschines' culpability, but what these episodes tell us about Athenian attitudes toward captives. This we learn from Demosthenes' summary of the second episode: "Aeschines did not feel pity for [the women] and did not weep for Greece on their account because they were sexually mistreated [*hubrizontai*] by ambassadors from their [sc. Athenian] allies" (Dem. 19.309). This treatment of captives, otherwise perhaps ordinary, is intolerable because Olynthos was an ally and these women were fellow Greeks, initially enslaved by Philip: to enjoy the fruits of Philip's sack of Olynthos is tantamount to "philippizing." Demosthenes himself becomes a victim of this same rhetorical strategy a few years later, when Dinarchos, prosecuting him on a charge of bribery, alleges that he betrayed Thebes to the Macedonians in 335 bce, one of the results being that "children and women, wives of the Thebans, were distributed to the tents of the barbarians [sc. Macedonians]" (Din. 1.24).

Greek sources focus on the sexual use of women and girls captured in war, but there is occasional reference to captive boys, and in this case, too, the attitude is different when the captor is a barbarian rather than a Greek. Xenophon tells us in the *Anabasis* that some Cyreans had boys, almost certainly war captives, whom they were loath to part with (Xen. *An.* 4.1.14) and that one Greek soldier took the son of an Armenian village chief as hostage and later, having fallen in love with him, took him home (4.6.1–3). Such conduct would almost certainly have been deemed unacceptable if the hostage were a Greek and the hostage holder a barbarian. We have already mentioned Herodotus' account of the Persians making handsome Ionian boys into eunuchs. Diodorus reports that, when Segesta was captured by the Syracusans in 307 bce, a free-born youth named Meno "became a slave to the king [the tyrant Agathokles] on account of the beauty of his body" (Diod. Sic. 21.16.2). Meno abided this *hubris* to his person until he was finally able to help poison Agathokles. This incident is portrayed negatively, in part because Agathokles had become, in the historiographic tradition, a wicked tyrant and thus no better than a barbarian. But one suspects that the Greeks, already concerned to protect the masculinity of free-born boys who were the objects of a man's desire, might have found particularly troubling the conversion of free-born Greek boys into slavish sexual objects.

Rome

There were norms that limited the sexual use of war captives at Rome as well, but these limitations were defined by a different set of issues, and especially by the degree to which using war captives sexually could undermine the stability of the Roman state. It was in most cases acceptable for Roman soldiers to have sexual intercourse with barbarians from the populations they conquered as the empire expanded. But this permissiveness probably did not typically extend to situations in which Roman soldiers sacked cities whose populations were composed of Roman or Italian citizens or were already loyal subjects of the empire, something that frequently happened during times of civil war.

So, for example, during the year of the four emperors, when the forces of Vespasian (led by M. Antonius Primus) overcame the forces of Vitellius in Cremona and proceeded to sack and burn the city, the victorious soldiers, in Tacitus' account, mixed "slaughter with sexual violence" (*caedes stupris*): "whenever a young woman or some handsome youth [*quis forma conspicuus*] fell into their hands, they, torn apart by the violent hands of those who were carrying them off, led their ravishers to mutual slaughter" (Tac. *Hist.* 3.33). Public opinion quickly turned against the army of Antonius: no one wanted to purchase slaves captured at Cremona, and those who were still alive were quietly ransomed by their relatives (Tac. *Hist.* 3.34). There are two problems here: the disorderly conduct of Antonius' men (their pursuit of sex is portrayed as occurring while the killing is still underway and leading to conflict between soldiers), which is the focus of Tacitus' account; and the fact that the sack of Cremona was part of a civil war that threatened the empire as a whole (Ziolkowski 1993, 71–2).

Concern for the stability of the Roman polity militated against the sexual use not only of Roman citizens captured in warfare, but probably also of provincials who had already become subjects. Queen Boudicca of Britain roused her countrymen to rebellion in 60 ce in order to avenge the sexual violation of her own daughters at the hands of Roman occupiers, presumably soldiers (Tac. *Ann.* 14.35). The fact that the victims were daughters of the queen is perhaps not unimportant. The Batavian chief Civilis is similarly motivated to revolt against Rome in 70 ce: the troops of the pretender Vitellius not only increased the levy of soldiers from this tribe beyond an already high burden, but "youths [*impubes*] of outstanding beauty—tallness in boyhood is characteristic of most of them—were dragged off for sexual exploitation [*ad stuprum*]" (Tac. *Hist.* 4.14). What is most troubling is the fact that the Batavi are Roman allies and not war captives (see Phang 2001, 256 and n. 127); but one also wonders if the fact that these sexual captives were boys was significant (but

compare Williams 2010, 112–16). It is true that male slaves, some of them probably captured during wartime, were acceptable sexual objects of the Roman male; but Romans might have felt greater unease about the wartime conversion of a free-born (even peregrine) boy into a slavish sexual object than about the sexual use of a slave boy who had been purchased or had been born a slave.

Political considerations are probably also in the background of a famous incident from the sack of Carthago Nova (Spain) by Scipio Africanus during the Second Punic War. When his men brought him a beautiful maiden as a war prize, Scipio declined. Livy identifies two related reasons: Scipio had learned that the maiden had been betrothed to a young man, who was passionately in love with her; and he felt that his responsibilities prevented him from the distractions of love (Livy 26.50.3–5; see Plb. 10.19.3–7). This act, Livy goes on to inform us, made Roman allies of the maiden's well-connected family, and this immediately bore fruit in the conscription of 1,400 local men to serve with Scipio as cavalymen (Livy 26.50.7–14). Scipio's shrewd political calculation was indeed probably the primary factor in his decision (see Ziolkowski 1993, 88–9), though Livy not surprisingly lavishes more narrative energy on the love triangle and Scipio's sexual renunciation.

One final example presents a more complex picture. In a campaign against the Tectosagi (Galatia) in 189 bce, Chiomara, the wife of a tribal chieftain, was taken captive by a Roman centurion, who forced himself on her sexually. He later decided to ransom her to her kinsmen and at this handover was decapitated by one of them—or, in one version, by the woman herself. What does this story tell us about the Romans' attitude toward the sexual use of war captives? The four authors who recount this story (Livy 38.24.2–10; Val. Max. 6.1, extract 2; Plu. *Mul. virt.* 22; Florus 1.27.6) present it as primarily an example of female bravery and modesty. Two of them also take notice of ethical shortcomings in the unnamed centurion and identify his greed. Livy tells us that the centurion exhibited “the lust and greed of the soldier” (*libidinis et avaritiae militaris*, Livy 38.24.2). But he goes on to take the centurion's lust for granted—Chiomara's body had become “a slave's by fate” (38.24.3)—and focuses on the fact that the soldier did not return Chiomara to her family without strings attached, “as a lover would” (*ut amans*, 38.24.4), but demanded a handsome ransom. Plutarch's account, too, centers on the centurion's greed as the cause of his downfall: “he was a man uneducated and lacking self-restraint in his pursuit of pleasure and money, but it was his desire for money that did him in” (Plu. *Mul. virt.* 22). Plutarch acknowledges the centurion's sexual access to war captives as part of his “soldierly fortune” (*tēi tuchēi stratiōtikōs*) and describes him as tenderly

“embracing” Chiomara as he is about to release her. All our sources focus on the remarkable conduct of the woman, and the two sources that diagnose the soldier's faults emphasize his greed rather than his sexual conduct.

The sexual use of captives in the Roman Empire differed from what we encounter in Greece in two important ways. First, the problematization of the practice had a different focus in Rome: whereas the Greeks homed in on lack of sexual self-control on the part of barbarian and tyrannical victors, the Romans worried about the political instability that could be generated, especially if perpetrated on those already subject to Rome. Second, Rome was an empire built over a long period of conquest, which meant that there were many more opportunities for enslavement and for the sexual use of these slaves than in Greece—especially when we consider that the Roman soldier, during the first two centuries of the principate, was discouraged from the common sexual outlet of marriage. Clearly the sexual use of captives was an extension of imperial power (Scheidel 2009, 295–303), but whether a “rape culture” permeated the Roman military and Roman society more generally (so Phang 2004, 212, 222 and *passim*) is debatable. The references in Roman sources to the sexual use of captives do not perhaps reflect greater frequency of the practice in the Roman Empire than in the Greek world; we must keep in mind that the practice was taken for granted and only mentioned, in Greece as well as Rome, when a particular incident ran afoul of normative practice.

Guide to Further Reading

For the Greeks, there is no comprehensive study of sexuality in military contexts. Ogden 1996 and Davidson 2007, 313–482 collect possible references to same-sex eros in Greek military life; Hindley 1994 and Leitaο 2002 provide more nuanced discussions of narrower issues. Pritchett 1991, 203–312 provides an overview of the Greek treatment of captives; Gaca 2010 provides good discussion of their use as sexual objects. For Rome, an excellent survey of the sexual practices of Roman soldiers can be found in Phang 2001. The attitude toward homosexuality within the Roman army is discussed in Walters 1997 and Williams 2010, 109, 120. Ziolkowski 1993 has good discussion of the sexual use of war captives; Scheidel 2009, 255–324 and Phang 2004 attempt to situate this practice in a larger social context.

Notes

1 I would like to thank Richard Hoffman, Gaius Stern, and Tom Hubbard for constructive feedback on earlier drafts of this chapter.

2 Greece: [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 53.4; Xen. *Hell.* 6.4.17; Pélékidis 1962, 52–59; Athenian ephebes, aged 18–20, were stationed in forts on the periphery of Attica, but separately from the rest of the army. Rome: Roth 1999, 10–11; but cf. Plu. *TG* 26.1, which suggests that, during the republic, new recruits were sometimes as young as 17 or even younger.

3 Greece: see generally Davidson 2007, 76–115. Rome: Livy 39.10.6 and 39.13.14; Williams 2010, 19.

4 Plato (*Smp.* 218B–220E) makes it clear that their military service at Potidaea came *after* Alcibiades' one attempt (unsuccessful, in this account) at a sexual encounter with Socrates. Alcibiades would have been about 20 years of age at Potidaea, if their service took place in 430 bce, toward the end of the siege, and about 18 (but see n. 2 above), if it took place earlier, in 432 bce, at the beginning of the operation.

5 On the use of the term *cinaedus* to refer to men who played the passive sexual role with another man, see generally Williams 2010, 193–7.

6 On possible legal disabilities faced by a *cinaedus* or *impudicus*, see Williams 2010, 214–16. Conspirators against the Roman state were accused, not infrequently, of engaging in sex with one another (e.g., Cic. *Cat.* 2.8, 23; Livy 39.8); it is quite possible that the sexual element in the story, as it is reported by Suetonius and Dio, originated in such a *topos*.

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Chapter 15

Athletics and Sexuality

Nick Fisher

The Introduction of Nudity and the Development of the Greek Games

Nudity was a highly distinctive feature of ancient Greek athletics. Greek male athletes, at all ages and levels, trained and competed completely naked. This unusual practice spread across the Greek world at the same time as the idea of “Panhellenic” contests open to all Greek-speaking competitors gained ground; the previously localized Peloponnesian games at Olympia became open to all Greeks perhaps toward 700 bce, and they were followed over the next half-century by games at the sanctuaries at Delphi, Nemea, and the Isthmus of Corinth. The verb for athletic training—*gumnazesthai*—and the noun for the location of athletic training—*gymnasion*—both derive from the word for “naked”: *gymnos*. Naked athletics became a defining element of Greek culture, defended by Greeks and regarded with suspicion or ambivalence by foreigners, including many Romans.

The earliest surviving use of the verb *gumnazesthai*, “to exercise naked,” plays on the sexual—specifically on the pederastic—associations of gymnastic activities:

Happy is the man who, in love, exercises naked [*gymnazetai*]
going home,
sleeping with a beautiful boy all day long.

(Theognis 1335–6)

The erotic connotations of male nudity and the prevalence of

culturally acceptable pederasty are an important part of the story from the beginning (Christesen 2002). Representations of athletes and boxers in Minoan art and in the Homeric poems reveal that in the Bronze Age and early Iron Age men competed wearing loin-cloths; in the classical period, Thucydides (1.5–6 = *Arete* 5) and Plato (*Republic* 452c) both stated that at the earliest Olympics athletes still wore them, and that this habit stopped “not many years ago.” (*Arete*, one of two sourcebooks mentioned throughout this chapter, is Miller 2004b; the other one, referred to as Hubbard, is Hubbard 2003.) Thucydides asserts that it was the Spartans who first engaged in naked gymnastics and oiled their bodies afterwards, while Plato says the Cretans were the first, followed by the Spartans. The claim that this happened “not long ago” seems to be a careless down-dating, designed to fit in with Thucydides’ generalized account of social developments down to the Persian Wars, and need not be scrutinized too closely (McDonnell 1991).

Differing stories were told much later about who first ran naked at the Olympics. Pausanias (1.44.1 = *Arete* 3) names Orsippos as the sprinter who accidentally dropped his loin-cloth in the 15th Olympiad; an inscription of Roman date found at Megara (*IG* vii 52), which Pausanias evidently saw, confirms as a Megarian tradition that the “warlike Orrhippos” first competed naked at Olympia. Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Ant. Rom.* 7.72.2 = *Arete* 4) names Akanthos of Sparta as the man who intentionally ran nude for the first time. One could suppose that Orsippos’ nudity was an accident, while Akanthos’ was a deliberate introduction of nudity already practiced at Sparta (Stewart 1997, 29–34). In view of the likelihood that compilers of early Olympiad dates were not all operating on the same assumptions, and given the probability, on archaeological grounds, that the traditional date of 776 bce for the first Olympiad is about 75 years too early, the standard calibration of the 15th Olympiad with a Julian date of 720 bce cannot be relied on (Shaw 2003, Christesen 2007), and the introduction of nudity could be considerably later. Representations of naked athletes on Proto-Corinthian, Corinthian and Proto-Attic vases provide the best evidence for dating; they appear from around 650 bce onwards and quickly become so standard that widespread adoption of the practice must have followed rapidly (Bonfante 1989, McDonnell 1991, Golden 1998, 65–6, Scanlon 2002, 211–12, 2005, 70–3). Nudity, then, was probably introduced at Sparta (and perhaps adopted at Olympia) around 650 bce, and it quickly became the norm.

Its introduction is evidently connected to the development of pederasty in Greece, whose origins remain hotly disputed. The claims that the Spartans or the Cretans introduced nudity are related to traditions found in Plato and other fourth-century sources according

to which approved homosexual relationships between older and younger youths had long been part of the upbringing of future male citizens in Crete and Sparta, whereby the older offered affection and military training (Pl. *Lg.* 636A–B, 836B = Hubbard 5.10–11; Arist. *Pol.* 1272^a23–6 = Hubbard 2.15; Ephoros *FGrH* 70 F 149, quoted by Strabo 10.4.21 = Hubbard 2.16; and Timaios *FGrH* 566 F 144). Many scholars have argued that such relations originally occurred across Greece as part of secretive “rites of passage” for young men, which could have included nude racing or fighting (see e.g. Bremmer 1980, 1990; Sargent, 1987). In many regions (such as Athens), these relationships would then have developed into optional, more open relationships, whereas in Crete and in Sparta they became part of a more complex, institutionalized upbringing for all young citizens—one adapted to fit new military and social needs, whereby youths spent some years in male houses (these were called *phitidia* or *sussitia* at Sparta and *andreia* in Crete: for Sparta, see Cartledge 2001, 91–105; for Crete, see Leitaο 1995 and Davidson 2007, 300–15). On this hypothesis, the initiative of introducing nudity into the highly public competitions at Olympia could well have come from Sparta, where nude training and contests at festivals existed probably from the seventh century; for example, the *Gymnopaediae* (“naked plays”) featured competing dancing choruses of naked males divided into three different age-groups (Parker 1989, Ducat 2006, 265–74). The Olympic victor lists reveal that Spartans were significant competitors there from the early stages (Moretti 1957, 1992).

But many scholars dispute this view of the origins of approved pederasty, primarily because there is no explicit representation of approved homosexual love in the earliest Greek poetry, Homer, Hesiod, and Archilochus; they suggest that it arrived, suddenly, as part of the leisured activities of elites in archaic Greece, along with athletics and sympotic drinking, providing sexual outlets for young men that did not upset marriages or cause rises in the birth rate (Dover 1988, 115–34; Percy 1996). There is a good case, however, for supposing that the presentation in Homer's *Iliad* of the emotional bond between Achilles and Patroklos includes hints of a sexual element; this would suggest that such “noble” love was known, but that it was not considered appropriate to present it unambiguously in an epic poem (Clarke 1978, Davidson 2007, 255–60). The most plausible conclusions are perhaps that rites of passage for young men (and women) involving secretive homosexual acts provide an essential part of the background from which overt pederasty came to the Greek world; and that widespread acceptance of the latter's legitimacy and of the appropriateness of erotically charged responses to the public display of naked beautiful youths were new developments and

constituted the essential prerequisites for the spread of nudity in all competitions (Stewart 1997, 27–34; Scanlon 2002, 205–19, Skinner 2005, 62–71).

The introduction of nudity may have had other causes, or further social effects. It has been argued that it was seen as a force promoting equality between contestants, and, together with other factors, it contributed to social cohesion and a more egalitarian political culture (Miller 2000). Removal of the indicators of status external to the body may have levelled up poorer and richer males at local games and removed signs of differential status or power between states in the more international games. This cannot have been the primary reason for the change, as an equalizing atmosphere could have been achieved through the use of undifferentiated loin-cloths (Scanlon 2005, 69–70). It may rather be that, when nudity was adopted for other reasons, it made it easier for those of lower status to be accepted in the training grounds or in the stadia; but how far competition at Panhellenic and other games remained predominantly the preserve of the elites is a much debated issue (e.g. Young 1984, Pleket 1992, 1998; for Athens, Kyle 1987, 2007, Fisher 1998, Pritchard 2003).

Nudity and Erotic Spectatorship

Good evidence supports the natural assumption that in such a society naked athletics had a powerful erotic appeal on the thousands of spectators at the games: men believed that nakedness, worn proudly as a “costume” (Bonfante 1989), should reveal the perfection of the trained body and that an erotic response to muscular, bronzed bodies gleaming with olive oil, like statues, was a natural part of the admiration elicited by divinely gifted beauty and skills. Praise poems, sung by choruses at victory celebrations at the sanctuary or on the victor's homecoming, often contain decorous allusions to the erotic appeal of the victors. The most explicit representation in Pindar's poetry of the impact of attractive athletes comes in a fragment of a praise poem (*enkōmion*) written to be performed at a *sumposion* in honor of a beautiful young man, Theoxenos, son of Hagesilas of Tenedos:

At the right time, in youth, one should,
my spirit, pluck one's loves;
but whoever, when he has seen the rays flashing bright
from Theoxenos' eyes,
is not overcome by waves of desire, has a black heart

hard bronzed from adamant or steel
with a cold flame, and dishonored
by Aphrodite of the curved eyebrow
may toil compulsively for wealth,
or in service to the boldness
of women may journey only down a cold road.
I at least, for Aphrodite's sake, melt like the wax
of sacred bees bitten by the sun, whenever I gaze
on the fresh-limbed youth of boys.
It is true then that in Tenedos too
Peitho and Charis live
in the son of Hagesilas.

(Pind. Fr. 123 = Hubbard 1.85)

The poem need not be read as a statement of the poet's own love for the youth; rather it asks the symposiasts to agree that sensible men find the pursuit of "fresh-limbed" boys and their returned glances to be more exciting than the love of women and to offer more scope for reciprocity, and that Theoxenos excites these feelings most intensely (Calame 1999, 19–23, Hubbard 2002; Larmour 1999, 139–44). The earliest of Pindar's victory odes, which celebrates the victory of the boy runner Hippokleas of Thessaly at the Pythian Games, expresses hopes that the performance of the song will "make Hippokleas even more splendid to look at for his age-mates and older men, and an object of interest for young maidens" (Pind. *Pyth.* 10. 55–9 = Hubbard 1.86), suggesting a normal progression for beautiful athletes from affairs with same-aged mates and older lovers to marriage (see also Pind. *Ol.* 8. 19–21, *Ol.* 10. 105, *Pyth.* 9.97–103, *Isth.* 7. 21–4; Instone 1990, Steiner 1998; 2001, 222–34).

Comparable intensity of erotic admiration for young athletes and other performers is frequently attested in classical Athens and was not, in my view, restricted to the elites, who had most leisure to frequent the gymnasia. Xenophon's *Symposium* is set at a party hosted by one of the wealthiest Athenians, Kallias, in honor of beautiful Autolykos' victory in the boys' *pankration* at the Panathenaia; to this party Kallias invited Autolykos' father Lykon, Sokrates, and four other well-known Athenians. Kallias is evidently Autolykos' "approved" lover. As they are all settled on their couches, the narrator comments:

Reflecting on what then took place, one would suppose straight away that beauty is a naturally royal thing, especially when combined with modesty [*aidōs*] and self-control [*sōphrosunē*], as it was with Autolykos. First, as when a beacon in the night draws everyone's eyes to it, so Autolykos' beauty drew the gaze of all to him; second, not one of those who gazed at him was not deeply

moved in his soul. Some became more silent, others made various gestures. (Xenophon, *Symposium* 1.8–10)

The formal entertainment at the party was provided by a Syracusan and his troupe of beautiful musicians and dancers; their initial dancing and musical displays caused the guests to stop worrying and to think of sex (Xen. *Smp.* 3.1). At the end of the party, after lengthy philosophical discussions on the spiritual value of pederasty, another spectacle forms a framing, contrasting, conclusion. The Syracusan's final display was an erotically suggestive show in which young male and female dancers mimed the marriage of Dionysos and Ariadne to Bacchic music, convincingly expressing their mutual love and affection, while the girl playing “Ariadne” preserved her modesty (*aidōs*). This aroused heterosexual desire in all the guests, and the party broke up in a mood where the bachelors were determined to get married and the married men were about to rush back to their wives (Xen. *Smp.* 9). This framing of serious discussions of pederastic eros between contrasting “sights” seems designed to suggest that males in this elite Athenian circle would feel desire for beautiful young performers of either gender and would hold that consummation of both kinds of eros was a good thing, provided that the respective protocols were maintained (see Wohl 2003).

Acceptance of bisexual desire and the eroticization of the gaze can also be found in Attic comedy and law court speeches. Aristophanes' male characters at all levels of society welcome the idea of anal sex or a fondle with an attractive youth as well as sex with a woman (see for example Ar. *Eq.* 1384–6, *Nu.* 1071–4, *V.* 578, *Av.* 137–42, *Ra.* 55). A character in a fragment from a late fourth-century Attic comedy describes the powerful impact of the sight of a young dancer playing ball:

A young man was playing ball,
...sixteen or seventeen years of age,
from Kos; the island seems to produce gods.
When he cast his eye on the seated watchers,
As he caught the ball or passed it, as one
we were all shouting out ...
What great rhythm, what character, what discipline
there was in everything he seemed to do or say.
The perfection of beauty, gentlemen, I've never
before heard or seen such charm [*charis*].
I'd have been taken much worse, if I'd stayed
any longer; as it is I don't feel at all well.

(Damoxenos Fr. 3 K–A = Hubbard 3.33)

In an early fourth-century speech (Lysias 3), a litigant could

evidently expect some (mild) disapproval because his passionate pursuit of an attractive youth had brought him into serious fights with a rival. The youth, described as a “Plataean young man,” seems to have been of indeterminate status; the disapproval was not caused by the pursuit as such, but by the fact that the speaker was well into middle age (see Dover 1989, 31–3, Fisher 2001, 34–6, Davidson 2007, 446–65, Todd 2007, 277–81).

Alternative views—that comedy and law court speeches reflect hostility among ordinary Athenians to pederastic pursuits as elite activities connected to their monopolization of athletic settings (see Hubbard 1998, Pritchard 2003)—are probably oversimplifications of more complex and ambivalent attitudes; and they underestimate the spread of egalitarian participation in athletic training and competition (see Fisher 2001, 58–62; 2011). The most significant evidence comes from a law court speech of 346/5 bce, at a time of political crisis related to the threat of Philip II of Macedon. Aeschines succeeded in destroying the career of a political enemy, Timarchos, and the case depended on persuading the jury that Timarchos, when a young man, had had so many lovers from whom he was taking money or gifts that he was virtually a prostitute; hence, under a law designed to set high moral standards for politicians, he was now ineligible to act as a full citizen. Aeschines asserted that he, like most Athenians, valued the practice of “noble pederasty” and he himself still competed with rivals over boys at the gymnasium; but he condemned the abuse of this practice. Hence he cited with approval allegedly Solonian laws preventing slaves from exercising or oiling themselves in the gymnasium and from being lovers of free boys (Aeschin. *In Tim.* 1.136–40 = Hubbard 4.7). Then he elaborated on the crucial distinction between “good” and “bad” youths by appealing to the interest that citizens naturally took in the athletic achievements and later careers of the most beautiful youths, naming some who, despite having many “lovers,” were free from scandal, and others who ruined the “most beautiful bloom of their vision” through their disgraceful behavior (1.157–9 = Hubbard 4.7). Two of those listed, Timesitheos and Antikles, are described as runners, and most or all of them had probably become known through their striking appearance in athletic competitions; they are the sort of beauties that Aeschines had earlier said all parents hoped their sons would turn out to be (1.134; see Winkler 1990, 63–4; Fisher 2001, 58–62).

Public appearances of beautiful young men were very frequent. Athens' greatest festival, the Panathenaia, included among its many contests one in “Good Manhood” (*euandria*), restricted to young Athenians organized in tribal teams, with prizes of an ox and a shield. It is described as a contest of “physical size and strength” (Xen. *Mem.*

3.3.13) and of young men's beauty (Ath. 565f; see Crowther 2004, 333–45). Victory statues of naked athletes, representations of ideal citizens as naked young men (most famously on the Parthenon frieze), their representation on painted pottery, or the naming on such vases of an individual youth as “beautiful” (*kalos*), all exemplify the astounding popularity in Greek culture of the eroticized gaze at idealized images of nudity (see [Figure 15.1a](#), [15.1b](#), [Figure 15.2a](#) and [Figure 15.2b](#); Stewart 1997; Steiner 1998 and 2001; Hubbard 2011, 210–12; and Chapter 3 in this volume).

Figure 15.1 Kylix by the Carpenter Painter. Getty 85 AE. 25.

Source: The J. Paul Getty Museum, Villa Collection, Malibu, California.



(a)



(b)

Figure 15.2 Calyx-krater signed by Euphronios,

Source: Berlin 2180. bpk, Berlin / Antikensammlung / Johannes Laurentius / Art Resource, NY.



(a)



(b)

The ideal of youthful beauty seems normally to be impressive musculature, shiny complexion, large buttocks, and a small penis with a long, tapered prepuce. A neat statement of this ideal, from the mouth of an imaginary old-fashioned Athenian with strong pederastic tastes, is provided when Stronger Argument in the debate in Aristophanes' *Clouds* summarizes the benefits of a traditional education:

shiny breast, clear skin,
big shoulders, short tongue,
large bum, small penis.

(Ar. Nu. 1015–19 = Hubbard 3.11)

Some representations of athletes in training and competition indicate that they might choose to tie the prepuce (foreskin) of the penis tight with a thin leather cord, often looping it back and tying the cord behind the waist (see [Figure 15.2b](#)). Late lexicographical sources reveal that this cord was called a *kunodesmē*, “dog’s leash” (“dog” could signify penis). To call this practice “infibulation,” as is often done by scholars, is misleading, as it confuses this procedure with the more drastic practice, used in the Roman period, of inserting a pin (*fibula*) into the foreskin to ensure continence (see below, p. 261; Vendries 2006). If the *kunodesmē* was used frequently it would lead to the elongation of the foreskin, and perhaps it would also produce some enhancement of its sensitivity (Sweet 1987, 131–3, Hodges 2001, 380–3; see the web debates at [Acroposthion.com](#). 2008 and [Wikipedia.com](#). {}). There could be various reasons for its use: to protect the glans of the penis in the combat sports; to avoid the embarrassment of an ill-timed erection or emission, especially perhaps when wrestling (wrestling moves often appear as metaphors for sexual positions, e.g. Aristophanes, *Peace* 884–905); or to enhance the attractiveness of the genitals, as long prepuces were thought a fine

adornment. By contrast, circumcision was regarded by Greeks as an ugly aberration practiced by foreigners such as Egyptians (see e.g. Galen, *On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body* 11.13; Larmour 1999, 140–3, Zanker 1995, 28–31, Hodges 2001, 375–84).

In Italy, nude athletics and erotic responses to them were regarded with greater ambivalence. The Etruscans, from the sixth century onwards, enjoyed some games, borrowing events, especially boxing, from the Greeks; the performers may have been of lower status, while in wall painting on Etruscan tombs elite men and women are often depicted watching together (as they are also shown dining together, in un-Greek fashion). Greek athletic nudity was regarded with ambivalence: some Attic vases featuring athletes with loin-cloths (*perizōmata*), found in Etruria, were clearly made specifically for the Etruscan market, while Etruscan representations of naked athletes may or may not reflect actual performers (see McDonnell 1991).

At Rome Greek events and their athletic nudity were slow to win popular favor (compared to gladiators, wild beast shows and chariot races), and attracted critical comments from elite writers. Performers did not enjoy high status. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, describing the introduction of Greek-style athletic events at Rome, states that the athletes wore briefs from the start (which he placed as early as c. 499 bce) and continued to do so until his own time (the period of Augustus; *Ant. Rom.* 7.71–3 = *Arete* 4). In fact athletics with Greek competitors and rules were first put on in Rome from the early second century by generals celebrating their triumphs (Crowther 2004, 381–5, Newby 2005, 24–6). Roman writers associated nudity and approved pederastic relations between citizens with Greek-style games and considered them to be as disreputable as (but not necessarily any more serious than) softness, gluttony and luxury (see Cic. *Tusc.* 4.70–1 = Hubbard 7.55; Nep. *Praef.* 3–4 = Hubbard 7.52; later, Tac. *Ann.* 14.20, Plin. *Ep.* 4.22, Plu. *Quaest. Rom.* 274d–e = Hubbard 7.53). Homosexual acts were neither forbidden by law nor disapproved of, and they were especially common between free-born males and their young slaves. “Noble pederasty” was not a traditional element in Roman society, and there was a law against “shameful sex” (*stuprum*) whose precise formulation remains obscure, but which would have allowed prosecution of the “corruption” of free-born youths as well as adultery with free wives. Prosecutions for offences with youths, however, seem to have been very rare; they were evidently regarded as less serious than adultery (Williams 2010, 103–36).

From the time of Augustus, Greek-style naked athletics was strongly encouraged by Roman rulers across the eastern half of the empire, and, along with their erotic associations, they were progressively introduced into Italy and Rome. In 27 bce Augustus

established the Actian games at Nikopolis, his new city in northwest Greece built overlooking the site of his naval victory at Actium, and he incorporated them into the Panhellenic circuit along with Olympia and the rest; around 2 bce games in honor of Augustus (the Sebastas) were introduced at Naples, and athletic events were celebrated regularly at Rome during his rule. Further expansion of athletic festivals in Rome followed under Nero (the Neronia: Suetonius, *Nero* 12, 21) and Domitian (the Capitoline Games: Suetonius, *Domitian* 4 = *Arete* 204). The most positive portrait in Augustan literature of a Greek-style love between a pair of athletes and warriors is that of the Trojans Nisus and Euryalus in Virgil's *Aeneid*: in the foot race in the funeral games for Anchises in Book 5 (292–344 = Hubbard 8.16) Nisus, leading, slipped where the track was bloody from cow sacrifice, but tripped up the next runner to let his beautiful beloved win; in Book 9 (176–449 = Hubbard 8.17) they volunteer for a night mission, kill many of the enemy, and die heroically, if unprofitably, together. They are portrayed both as a Greek-style older/younger pair of lovers and in death, as heroic Romans given everlasting fame by the concluding authorial verses of the poet (Williams 2010, 125–30).

Also in the Augustan period baths expanded to become leisure complexes with extensive areas for athletics as well as for social interaction; this reflects greater interest among the leisured classes throughout the western empire in Greek-style athletic exercise and competitions; also a greater tolerance for public nudity (mixed bathing was widely available) and concomitant sexual opportunities (see Newby 2005, 26–37, Fagan 1999, especially 24–39, 40–74). Latin satire and Pompeian graffiti often play with the admiration attracted by impressive penises of studs and boys on display at the baths (e.g. Petronius, *Satyricon* 92, Martial 1.23, 1.96, 9.27, 9.33, 11.63, 11.75).

The increased popularity of eroticized athletics seems to have had a significant impact on the decoration of bath complexes and luxury villas from the late first century ce onwards, notably in the villas of the Emperors Domitian and Hadrian, both known for their promulgation of Greek culture. Idealized naked statues of athletes and of mythological figures like Bacchus, Paris, and above all Ganymede, the immortal wine waiter of the Olympian gods and Zeus' beloved, frequently adorned the buildings and gardens of such villas, often representing youths and boys with sensuous limbs, downcast eyes and luxuriant hair (see Bartman 2002, Newby 2005, 88–140). Hosts and guests will easily have connected eroticized images of Ganymede and others with the beautiful slave boys serving the wine, encouraged by the poets' comparisons between Ganymede and slave waiters or sexual favorites of emperors like Domitian (e.g. Statius, *Silvae*, 1.6.33–4, 3.4.12–20, 4.2.10–12; Martial 2.43, 9.25, 9.36; Williams 2010, 59–

Gymnasia and Palaestrae as the Settings for Pederastic Socialization and Sponsorship

Not surprisingly, then, in Greece the spaces for athletic training (gymnasia, often public) and wrestling grounds (palaestrae, often privately owned) were the most important settings for the observation of attractive youths and the pursuit of pederastic relationships. In many states such relationships were defended on the grounds that they were reciprocally beneficial, as they provided mutual affection, sexual pleasure (subject to certain protocols), and educational advantages for the younger partners. For Athens, late archaic and early classical vases (roughly from 560 to 470 bce) regularly associate scenes of homosexual courtship with gymnastic settings and accessories (see [Figure 8.7](#), [Figure 15.1a](#), [Figure 15.1b](#), [Figure 15.2a](#) and [Figure 15.2b](#); full collection of material and discussions in Lear and Cantarella 2008). From the mid-fifth century abundant literary evidence attests pervasive opportunities for ogling comments, pick-ups, and the development of serious relationships; it also illuminates the tensions involved. The fullest evidence for this homoerotic atmosphere comes from Plato. In both the *Charmides* and the *Lysis* adult Athenians, including Socrates, show considerable excitement at the appearance of attractive boys at the palaestrae; they are especially pleased when a new youth who attracts a crowd of *erastai* has a lovely body, like that of a statue, a noble family, and a soul apt for philosophy (*Chrm.* 154A–C = Hubbard 5.4; *Ly.* 204E = Hubbard 5.5). The *Phaedrus*, the *Symposium* and other protreptic texts demonstrate the intensity of the competition between aspirant lovers for the pretty youths and of the matching competition among the youths to attract the attention of influential older men; for the possibilities of teasing, exploitation, and betrayal on both sides, see Pausanias' speech in the *Symposium* (180C–8F = Hubbard 5.7), Lysias speech and Socrates' first speech in the *Phaedrus* (231–4, 238F–41E = Hubbard 5.9), and also Pseudo-Demosthenes, *Eroticus* 60 (= Hubbard 4.12).

The chances are relatively high that gymnastic trainers—both the general coach (often called *paidotribēs*) attached to gymnasia and palaestrae, and the more personal trainer (often called *gumnastēs*), who developed fitness exercises and management of regimen—would

attempt to involve their charges in reciprocal love relationships; and that some “lovers,” both friends and trainers, would try to foster their beloveds’ careers through sponsorship, as well as offering more general advantages, such as engagement in political or philosophical culture and assistance in making social contacts. Support for this can be found both in literary texts and in the iconography of Athenian vases (see Fisher 1998; Hubbard 2005; 2011, 213–18). In Pindar’s *Olympian* 10, performed for Hagesidamos, a boy boxer from Locri Epizephyrii in Southern Italy, the victor is asked to show a kindly return (*charis*) to Ilas, as Patroklos did to Achilles, since such honing helps a natural talent to win massive fame (Pind. *Ol.* 10.16–21). The ancient commentators’ suggestion that Ilas was Hagesidamos’ trainer is probably correct; and, since the intense friendship of Patroklos and Achilles was by this time regularly interpreted as homoerotic, its choice as the model for their relationship suggests that Ilas and Hagesidamos are to be seen as involved in a partnership of reciprocal pleasure and benefit (*charis*). The suggestion is confirmed at the end of the song: Pindar praises Hagesidamos for being both a victor and

beautiful in form
and imbued with that youthful loveliness which once
averted shameless death from Ganymede
with the aid of Cyprian-born Aphrodite.

(Pind. *Ol.* 10.99–105)

As at least by the beginning of the sixth century Zeus’ motive for carrying Ganymede off to Olympus had become explicitly his homosexual desire, this parallel must be present here (Steiner 1998, 140; Hubbard 2005, 139–40; Provencal 2005; Fisher 2006); the comparison also implies that the beauty of a young athlete deserves immortality—for Hagesidamos, the fame bestowed by the song as well as by the victory. Comparably, in *Pythian* 10, written for the boy runner Hippokleas of Thessaly, the poet hopes that his song will make the boy yet more wondrous to his age-mates and to older men, and an object of interest to young girls; and he mentions as being involved in the victory celebrations Hippokleas’ proud father, a previous victor, and Thorax, not a relative but (according to the ancient commentators) a “companion” of the boy (*hetairos*, probably implying “approved lover”). Hippokleas was a member of an elite family in Thessaly, which gave hospitality to Pindar and commissioned the victory song. It thus seems likely that Thorax was acting also as sponsor and guide to the youth, though not in this case as his trainer (see Hubbard 2005, 145–6). In the Hellenistic and Roman periods a number of Greek erotic epigrams play with the theme that the wrestling trainer—“most fortunate of men”—would seize the sexual

opportunities offered by his constant contact with beautiful youths (e.g. AP 12.34; 12.192 = Hubbard 6.70; 12.206; 12.222 = Hubbard 6.79).

Athenian vases display many representations of trainers, identified above all by their holding a long staff (usually a cleft one) and often adjusting the limbs of their athletes; many of these scenes suggest an erotic relationship through the giving of presents, as in many other “courtship” scenes between older and younger males; through an intensity of eye contact; or through a significant revelation of nudity. Often in fact it cannot be determined whether the one making advances is a trainer or an admirer visiting the palaestra, and in some cases the trainer seems not noticeably older than the athlete (see Figure 8.9, Figure 15.1a, Figure 15.2a, and Figure 15.2b; Hubbard 2005, 146–59). A number of late archaic and early classical red figure vases that portray such contacts in gymnastic contexts include a money pouch being offered by the lover to the youth, in contrast to *sumposion* scenes, which do not show money being offered (see Kilmer 1993, 11–21; Von Reden 1995, 195–216; Fisher 1998, 93–101). This may suggest that, at least in the first half of the fifth century, because gymnasia and palaestrae were more public while *sumposia* were occasions for more private luxury and enjoyment, the idea of an exchange of money was more acceptable: in athletic contests the money could be understood not as payment for sex, but as a part in the positive relationship between trainer or sponsor and young athlete designed to help him achieve excellence in these areas of male competition.

On the other hand, the dangers of improperly motivated relationships initiated in the gymnasia were well known, producing much legislation and regulation. For Athens in particular, we can trace the growth of moral concerns and laws. Aeschines, in his speech against Timarchos of 346/5 bce, cites laws that protected boys at gymnasia as well as at schools: they regulated opening and closing hours for school and palaestra (avoiding the hours of darkness), the numbers and ages of pupils, the supervision of slave attendants (*paidagōgoi*), the discipline and good behavior of boys, teachers and trainers, and the proper order at the athletic and musical contests at the schools, palaestrae, and the dithyrambic choruses (1. 7–11 = Hubbard 4.7). These laws, despite being described as Solonian by Aeschines, were probably passed some time in the fifth century and were designed to prevent inappropriate sexual contacts between the boys and the adults (their teachers, trainers, slave attendants, or other visitors) or between the boys themselves. They do not, however, despite Davidson (2007, 68–98) justify the view that older youths and men were prevented by law from attending gymnasia or palaestrae at

all when under-age youths were exercising; his view fails to account for texts showing older men admiring and pursuing youths there (compare Hubbard 2011, 200–2). The dangers of inappropriate contacts produced jokes in comedy as well: Aristophanes twice claimed that he (unlike his rivals) never used his fame as a newly successful comic poet to pick up boys at the palaestrae (Ar. V. 1023–5 = Hubbard 3.12; Ar. *Pax* 762–3); the assumption is that members of the social elite might use their pulling power to seduce young athletes. More generally, the laws underlying the prosecution of Timarchos were not directed at all citizens, but only at those who chose later to play an active part in public life, in the assembly, law courts, or public offices; they could only operate retrospectively; and in fact prosecutions seem to have been very rare.

In the Hellenistic period, in old Greece and Macedonia, as well as throughout the East, where innumerable new Greek-style cities were founded after the conquests of Alexander the Great, gymnasia and stadia developed into the standard bearers of Hellenic culture; they were expanded into large cultural complexes at the heart of the cities and were both the favored leisure areas for the Hellenized elites and the settings for the civic organizations for training the young (the *ephēbeiai*; see e.g. Gauthier 2010). Varied festivals, many featuring competitions with naked athletics, were even more important to civic life than before. The sexualized atmosphere of gymnasia and the attractiveness of their stars continued throughout the Hellenistic and Roman periods: for example, Theocritus' second idyll displays the tragic love of an unmarried girl who was betrayed by a glistening sprinter named Delphis, who, she is informed, is now in love with another, either a woman or a man. Debates in Greek texts of the second century ce over the relative value of married and pederastic love continue to set the latter in the gymnasia and palaestrae (e.g. Plutarch, *Amatorius*, Achilles Tatius, *Leucippe and Cleitophon* 2.35–8, Lucian, *Amores* 44–5).

The dangers of inappropriate pederasty in gymnasia remained a concern. In a detailed set of regulations recently discovered on an inscription from the Macedonian city of Beroia (first half of the second century bce), the gymnasiarch, the public official in charge of the gymnasium, must be between 30 and 60; those over 30 need to have special permission to strip and exercise; those roughly between 20 and 30 are barred from talking to the boys; excluded altogether were slaves, freedmen, the disabled, any male convicted of self-prostitution (*hetairēsis*), petty traders, drunks, and madmen (Gauthier and Hatzopoulos 1993, 70–8 = *Arete* 185, p. 139; Gauthier 2010, 93–6). Public and private sponsorship of promising athletes is also in evidence in Hellenistic cities; inscriptions from Ephesus (c. 300 bce)

show citizenship and other rewards being given to a successful young athlete, Athenodoros, who had been trained there, won victories there and at Nemea, and declared himself at the victories to be Ephesian; and citizenship was given also to those who had helped to finance his training (*I.Ephesos* 1415, 1416, 2005). Both issues surface in various letters dated to circa 257 bce from the “Zenon archive” from Ptolemaic Egypt. They reveal that Zenon, the manager of a very large estate at Philadelphia, was concerned for the education—including musical and athletic training—of a number of his “wards” (apparently orphans of Greek soldiers). In one letter Hierokles—who is engaged, initially with two others, in running a palaestra in Alexandria—responds as reassuringly as he can to Zenon's concerns that only if Pyrrhos were sure to win should expenditure sponsoring his athletic progress be continued; and in a later letter he expresses the fear that, if he is to be left in sole charge of the establishment, his enemies may cause the king to become suspicious that he is keeping the school open because he is a “lover of young men” (*philoneios*): he feels he should either share responsibility with others or leave the post (see P. Lond. VII. 1941 = *Arete* 207, and P. L. Bat. XX. 51).

Female Athletics

The picture given so far is of a male world of eroticized athletics. But there is some evidence for the involvement of unmarried girls, both as part of the audience of the Greek games and as competitors in athletic contests and displays (see Dillon 2002). Pausanias states that unmarried girls could watch the Olympic games, while married women (apart from one privileged exception, the priestess of Demeter Chamene) were excluded: any who disobeyed were to be thrown over a cliff above Olympia. The only case of a breach was an over-enthusiastic mother of a victor who pretended to be his male trainer but was exposed when she jumped over the trainers' enclosure. Thereafter trainers had to enter the enclosure during the games as naked as the competitors (Pausanias 5.6.7, 5.13.10, 6.20.9 = *Arete* 96, 103). The exclusion of wives may reflect conservative fear of the possibility of adultery, while the admission of girls may have been permitted because, protected by older male relatives, they might admire the performances of possible husbands while being themselves on decorous display (see Pindar's mention, cited above, of the appeal of beautiful youths to young girls). Later evidence, for example in Greek novels, also suggests that a heterosexually charged atmosphere complemented the homoerotic (Scanlon 2002, 222–4; but see the

doubts of Kyle 2007, 225–8). There is no evidence that married women were excluded from the other Panhellenic or local games, and there are some hints that they were present; for instance a fifth-century mime by the Syracusan writer Sophron seems to have involved “Women watching the Isthmian games” (Fr. 10 Kaibel). When Greek athletics finally reached Rome, however, Augustus banned women from watching (Suet. *Aug.* 44), perhaps because of the nudity.

In classical Greece pre-marriage girls often engaged in athletic displays. Olympia again provides the fullest description (Pausanias 5.16 = *Arete* 158). Foot races were celebrated every four years in the Olympic stadium (on a course shortened by one sixth), at a festival for Hera, the goddess of marriage (the Heraia), who shared the great sanctuary with Zeus. The races were managed, on behalf of the city of Elis, by a ritual body of married women called “the Sixteen,” who also wove the robe (*peplos*) for Hera and organized women's choral dances for the local heroines Hippodameia and Physkoa. According to Pausanias, their duties were established when wise women from the sixteen cities of Elis helped resolve a dispute for control over the Olympia sanctuary between Elis and Pisa, the local area around Olympia, during the early sixth century (Crowther 2004, 53–64, Christesen 2007, 51–4). The competitors for the foot races were divided into three age classes, and they ran with loosened hair, a short tunic to just above the knee, and baring the right shoulder down to the breast (Paus. 5.16 = *Arete* 158; Serwint 1993). Two statuettes resembling this pose are plausibly held to represent girls running at this contest: a sixth-century bronze statuette found in Albania, perhaps of Lakonian workmanship (British Museum inv. bronze 208; see [Figure 15.3](#)), and a Roman marble copy of a probable fifth-century bronze (Vatican inv. 2784). These races probably originated in pre-nuptial rites for young Elean girls, moving in three stages into preparedness for marriage. Later they were opened to non-Elean girls, held every four years in the Olympia stadium and not in Elis, and timed to occur just before, or just after, the men's Olympics (see Dillon 2000; Scanlon 2002, 110–2 and 2008; and also Kyle 2007, 218–21).

Figure 15.3 Bronze statuette of girl running.

Source: London Br.208. © The Trustees of the British Museum.



At Sparta female upbringing, which included some athletics, was taken very seriously. Our sources, all non-Spartan, tend to show either a favorable or a hostile bias: the favorable view was that females were brought up to be fit and strong, able to bear good male warriors, while the critical view was that Spartan women were allowed too much freedom and became uncontrollable. All agreed that physical education played an unusually important role in the upbringing of Spartan girls, and this can be trusted (Ducat 2006, 223–48). The positive picture starts with a fragment of the account of Spartan

society written by Kritias, the pro-Spartan leader of the Athenian oligarchic junta in 404–3, who argues that, to produce humans with the strongest bodies, “the mother of the child to be born too should make her body strong and take exercise” (Kritias Fr. 32 D–K). Xenophon developed this idea with the claim that Lycurgus established contests for women in running and strength as for men, in the belief that strong offspring come from two strong parents (Xen. *Lac.* 1.4 = *Arete* 152; cf. also Philostratos, *De gymnastica* 27). Additional events, mentioned by two later authors, Plutarch (*Lyc.* 14–15 = *Arete* 153) and the Roman poet Propertius (3.14), are probably inventions. One form of contest peculiar to Spartan women is attested: the “butt-kick” (*bibasis*), counting the number of continuous jumps touching the buttocks with the heels; a late source for this (Pollux 4.120 = *Arete* 156) is confirmed by Aristophanes’ presentation of a stereotypical Spartan married woman, Lampito (Ar. *Lys.* 78–82), whose beauty, complexion, strength, and breasts are admired, and who herself boasts: “I do my exercises and jump up to the bum.” The negative picture is best represented by the tirade delivered by Andromache in Euripides’ eponymous play:

Not even if she wished
 Could a daughter of the Spartiates be chaste,
 Who, deserting their homes, along with the young men,
 With naked thighs and loosened clothes,
 Share the running tracks and wrestling grounds,
 Intolerable in my view. Should one then be surprised
 If you do not educate your women to be chaste?

(Eur. *Andr.* 595–601 = *Arete* 154)

Some mirror handles and vase handles displaying young girls wearing trunks, probably of Lakonian manufacture, may represent these young wrestlers (Ducat 2006, 229–31).

For the running contests, Pausanias (3.13.7 = *Arete* 159) describes a sacrifice and races for an unnamed hero and for Dionysos, performed by the “daughters of Dionysos” and the “daughters of Leukippos”; and the Hellenistic poet Theocritus describes races run in “mythical time” by 240 girls of the same age as Helen, oiled in male fashion (presumably then naked or nearly naked), by the banks of the Eurotas (Theoc. 18.22–5). While it is unclear how many races there were or how girls might be chosen to participate, athletic training was evidently an important part of girls’ preparations for marriage and childbearing. Competitive singing and dancing by teams of choruses are attested early in lengthy fragments from the *Partheneia*, maidens’ songs, written by the Spartan poet Alcman (c. 600–550 bce); with their playful allusions to girls’ passions and jealousies, they suggest

that homoerotic emotions in the choruses were encouraged, as a parallel to the relationships between boys and young men; this is supported by Plutarch's remark (*Lyc.* 18 = Hubbard 2.13) that noble and good women loved maidens in the same approved way as the men did (Calame 1997). The nudity or semi-nudity of the athletic and choral performances was defended by Plutarch (*Lyc.* 14–15) through the (possibly contradictory) arguments that there was nothing shameful about it, as it was conducted with modesty and gave the girls a sense of pride, rivalry and public ambition; and that the sight of the naked girls roused the young men erotically and encouraged them to think positively of marriage.

Elsewhere Pausanias mentions games at Argos for Nemean Zeus and the Heraia, referring to the period from the fourth century on, when the Nemean games had been moved to Argos (Paus. 2.24.2); thus the Nemean games came to hold girls' races as at Olympia. Some statuettes of girl wrestlers made elsewhere (e.g. at Aegina) may also represent local girls' contests, and on Lesbos girls' beauty contests are attested (Alcaeus Fr. 130b). At Athens young girls' rites of passage for Artemis were held at Brauron on the east coast and at other coastal sites, and they were related to the myth of the attempted sacrifice and escape of Iphigeneia, though again it is uncertain how many girls would have participated, living at the sanctuaries and engaging in ritual acts associated with Artemis and wild animals. Many representations of young girls on specially shaped vases (*krateriskoi*) have been found dedicated at these Artemis shrines, showing young girls dancing, running, and performing ritual acts at altars, wearing short tunics or naked; on one there is a figure wearing a bear mask, on another an actual bear. Late sources say that Artemis ordered the girls to "imitate the bear," because she was angry when girls had killed a tame bear. Aristophanes and his commentators (*Lys.* 645) suggest that at a key point in the ritual the girls shed their yellow tunics. This all suggests that young girls (about 5–10) in Attica engaged in ritual running and chases, with some nudity; but there is no sign of public running contests, as occurred at Sparta (see Scanlon 2002, 139–74).

From the beginning of the fourth century bce rich women appear as victors at the Panhellenic games, as owners of horses entered in the chariot races: the pioneer was Kynisca, the sister of King Agesilaos, victor in 396 and 392, whose proud epigram survives on a statue base at Olympia: in it she boasts that she was the only Greek woman to have won this crown (Pausanias 3.8.1; *IvO* 160 = *Arete* 151a and 151b). In the Hellenistic and Roman periods, as women became increasingly wealthy and independent, inscriptions reveal that many rich women won in chariot and horse races; such was Belestiche, a mistress of Ptolemy II Philadelphos. Other inscriptions show that

females might occasionally participate in the exercises and wider culture of the gymnasium in Hellenistic cities and in the distribution of oil; and that women's running events came in time to be introduced at many games, including the Pythian, the Nemean, and the Isthmian, which reflects an increase in acceptable public display for women in these periods (van Bremen 1996, 142–56). The best piece of evidence is the proud dedication from Delphi by one Hermesianax, son of Dionysios (who held citizenship at Tralles, Athens, and Delphi), whose three daughters Tryphosa, Hedeia, and Dionysia all won victories at multiple games (SIG³ 802 = *Arete* 162). At Rome, Domitian's Capitoline games included a race for maidens, but they did not last.

Sexual Health and Abstinence

Among the purposes of athletics for males, it was often assumed, was the aim of keeping the body healthy, fit, and well prepared for war and work, as it was comparably supposed, for Spartan females at least, to aid the production of fit sons. As athletic competitions, however, became more intense and athletes more specialized, the development of training and diet to create the appropriate muscles and endurance for different events was increasingly criticized as neither providing the bodies and the skills necessary for war nor being conducive to lasting good health. This process began in the late fifth and early fourth centuries. A general attack on the uselessness of athletes is found in a fragment of Euripides (Fr. 282 K = *Arete* 230). Medical views to the effect that the condition of the highly trained athlete, formed by excessive exercise and over-eating, was unnatural, extreme, and unstable were expressed in many writings of the Hippocratic corpus (e.g. the Hippocratic *Nourishment* 34, or *Aphorisms* 1.3), and also by Plato (*Republic* 404A), Aristotle (*Generation of Animals* 768^b29–34), Cicero (*Tusculan Disputations* 2.40) and Plutarch (*Philopoemen* 3). Such themes were most fully explored in the many works of Galen in the second century ce and beginning of the third; he advocated moderate exercise, especially using the small ball, and a healthy diet—rather than intense training and excessive eating to build up strength, which could lead to obesity and long-term injuries (e.g. in his treatises *Protreptic to Study the Arts*, *To Thrasyboulos*, *On Exercise with the Small Ball*, and *The Thinning Diet*—all translated in Singer 1997; extracts in *Arete* 177, 215).

Doctors and philosophers applied these principles of balance and order to issues of sexual health and its relation to athletic success. In general they tended to recommend moderation and self-control in sex

as in food and drink; some might go further to suggest total abstinence, either throughout a period of training or just before the events. Such advice was not offered to women, since female athletics was limited to unmarried girls, and the dominant view in ancient medicine reflected male ideology in holding that women between menarche and menopause benefited from regular sexual activity and pregnancy. How widely such recommendations were made is unclear, and how far they were accepted by male athletes whose fame no doubt brought them many bodily temptations is open to doubt (as is the case with comparable admonitions in the modern world). Underlying the recommendations for sexual abstinence for athletes—as for musicians, singers, and actors—was the belief that sexual activity and loss of semen weakened the body, while abstinence maintained strength and exemplified self-control (Scanlon 2002, 227–36). So the Hippocratic works report that doctors suggest sexual restraint along with dietary advice (e.g. *Prorrhetic* 2.1.4); and Plato mentions Ikkos of Tarentum and other athletes who touched neither women nor boys throughout their period of training, in order to increase their vigour and chances of victory (Pl. *Lg.* 839C–40C = Hubbard 5.11; also Dio Chrysostom 28.12, Aretaeus, *De causis et signis acutorum morborum* = *On the Causes and Symptoms of Acute Diseases* 2.5.4). Philostratos (*De gymnastica* 49–52) suggested that sexual acts and nocturnal emissions weakened the body, at least temporarily, and hence those who wished to take exercise then had to be careful of their breathing and their stamina. Nocturnal emissions were morally better than constant sexual activity, being both involuntary and less damaging; the one cleansed the body of excess semen, but the other weakened it.

Extreme measures might be taken by some. In the Roman period singers, actors, and occasionally athletes in heavy events might practice infibulation, inserting a pin in the penis to prevent erections, in order to protect their voices or other powers: Juvenal (6. 73, 379) and Martial (7.82, 9. 27, 11.75, 14.215) play with the idea that, when defibulated, such men were especially eager and well endowed. Sexual continence was urged upon young singers, with or without infibulation, to protect the voice or to delay its breaking (Aristotle, *History of Animals* 781^a21–7, Celsus, *On Medicine* 7.25.3). An epitaph for a young musician (*kitharōdēs*) proudly records that he was “uncorrupt” (*aphthoros*; see Vendries 2006). Galen further reports that some athletes in training tried to repress wet dreams by chilling the genitals during sleep by resting them on flattened lead (Galen, *De simplicium medicamentorum temperamentis ac facultatibus* = *On the Mixtures and Powers of Simple Medicines*, Kuhn 12.232); on the other hand, he held that long-term chastity lessened desire and capacity and

the genitals became thin and wrinkled like those of old men, whereas the testicles of men who have frequent sex from youth on became enlarged, as they experienced an increase in blood flow and desire (Galen, *De locis affectis* = *On the Affected Parts*, Kuhn 8.450–1).

Guide to Further Reading

For the ancient sources, two excellent collections are Miller 2004b on Greek sport and Hubbard 2003 on Greek and Roman homosexuality. Scanlon 2002 offers helpful explorations of many aspects of erotics and Greek athletics.

The most reliable general guide to ancient sexuality is Skinner 2005; and to ancient sport is Kyle 2007. Golden 1998 and Miller 2004a are very reliable accounts of Greek athletics and sport, while athletics in the Roman world are well handled by König 2005 and Newby 2005. Dover 1989 is a classic and pioneering study of Greek homosexuality, which has provoked many debates; Davidson 2007 is a wide-ranging and controversial reappraisal of “Greek love,” critical of many views that became orthodox after Dover. Williams 2010 has transformed our understanding of homosexualities at Rome and is now the standard treatment. Lear and Cantarella 2008 gives the fullest presentation and best discussion of the vase painting evidence for Greek homosexuality.

König 2010 reprints a number of important articles on Greek athletics, and Verstraete and Provencal 2005 is an interesting collection of new articles on ancient homosexualities.

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Chapter 16

Phusis and Sensuality

Giulia Sissa

Let us begin with Platonic love. Let us open the *Cratylus* and the *Phaedrus*, at the point where Socrates tells us about Greek desire, *erōs*, in a context of friendship and idealization.

The name *himeros* [longing] was given to the stream [*rhous*] which most draws the soul. For, because, once let burst [*hiemenos*] and longing [*ephiemenos*] for things, it flows [*rhein*], and thus violently sucks up the soul with the impetus of its stream, because of all this power, it was called *himeros*. And the word *pothos* [yearning] signifies that it pertains not to that which is present, but to that which is elsewhere [*allothi pou*] or absent, and therefore the same feeling which is called *himeros* when its object is present, is called *pothos* when it is absent. And *erōs* [love] is so called because it flows in [*esrei*] from without, and this flowing is not inherent in him who has it, but is introduced through the eyes; for this reason it was in ancient times called *esros*, from *esrein*—for we used to employ omicron instead of omega—but now it is called *erōs* through the change of omicron to omega. Well, what more is there that you want to examine? (Pl. *Cra.* 419E–420B)

Fluxes, fluids, senses—and syllables. This is what we find, in the texture of the text. Again, in the *Phaedrus* Socrates evokes

the irrational desire that overpowers one's belief oriented toward what is right and is carried away, toward the pleasure of beauty, being strongly strengthened [*errōmenōs rhōstheisa*] by its kindred desires for beauty in bodies—this desire, victorious in its carrying away, taking its name from that strength [*rhōmē*], it is called *erōs*. (Pl. *Phdr.* 238B–C)

Erōs is *rhōmē*: an intense energy. A lover gazes at his beloved, and suddenly, through the eyes, particles (*merē*) come to him (*epionta*) in a flood (*rheonta*). His soul is nourished and warmed—hence the name

we give to desire, *himeros* (*Phdr.* 251C; see Peponi 2002). *Himeros* is *ta merē rheonta*: particles in flux, corpuscular humidity, streaming from a beautiful body to your staring eyes. In the dialogue on *erōs*, the *Symposium*, Eryximachos, the physician, will echo the same language of liquidity. The very definition of medicine hinges on filling and emptying: “medicine is, in sum, the knowledge of the erotic accords of the body, in terms of fullness and emptiness” (*Smp.* 186C). Hot and cold, wet and dry, sweet and bitter are the sensual qualities on which medicine acts, by creating equilibrium and health. Agathon, the tragic poet, also speaks in the same sensuous idiom.

Youngest, then, and most delicate [*hapalōtatos*] is he, and withal humid [*hugros*] of form: for he would never contrive to fold himself about us every way [*periptussesthai*], nor begin by coming in and out of every soul so secretly, if he were hard [*sklēros*]. Clear evidence of his fit proportion and humidity of form is found in his shapely grace, a quality Love has exceptionally, as it is ordinarily agreed by all: unshapeliness and Love are ever at war with each other. (Pl. *Smp.* 196A)

Eros is soft. Eros is humid. Eros cannot be hard. And yet Eros is virile. *Malakia* and *andreia* go together (*Smp.* 195D–E; 196D). We are in a “homosensual” company, so to speak, and these qualities are not only compatible, but also a matter of unconditional admiration. In his dialogues on language, pleasure, and love, Plato offers us a glimpse of the sophisticated Athenian elite of intellectuals, poets and physicians who, between a drinking party and a session at a fitness club, leisurely loved each other and extolled unabashedly their reciprocal love.

If we now move on to Plato's most demanding and normative political theory, presented in the *Laws*, we hear a very different voice: not glamorizing praise but sour blame. In this dialogue a group of earnest men sketch out the blue print for a perfect city, to be founded in Crete. An anonymous character called “the Athenian”—Plato, perhaps—explains why, in such a city, sexual unions should be confined to monogamic marriage. The citizens must copulate only in order to procreate legitimate children. Adultery is therefore proscribed. *A fortiori*, same-sex love is unacceptable. In such an embrace, the anonymous Athenian points out, one of the partners mimics a woman, while the other one yields to softness, *malakia*. Both will deserve reproach. The arguments, the Athenian insists, will have to revolve around *aretē*, excellence: what is the experience of *erōs* and *aphrodisia* that is most conducive to the qualities of self-control? Not the enjoyment of a young thing for pleasure, to be sure, but a kind of affection that tends to the soul of the beloved. *Psuchē* ought to prevail over *sōma*. But, Plato argues, an athlete, full of semen as he is and

bursting with youth, would certainly protest this ranking. It is against the feelings of such a densely corporeal citizen, all flesh, juices, and muscles, that the laws will have to find a persuasive justification. Some indulgence will have to be allowed for those who, out of shame, hide their erotic activities. Let them handle the force of pleasures (*tōn hedonōn hē rhōmē*): they will keep it untrained (*agumnastos*), by “diverting its flux [*epichusis*] and nutriment [*trophē*] to another part of the body, by means of exercise [*ponoi*]” (Pl. *Lg.* 841A5–7). For those who are shameless, on the contrary, the law either will prohibit any contact (*haptesthai*) with anybody—no concubines, no males—except one's wedded wife, or will punish the offenders with *atimia*, loss of civic rights. The transgressors will become strangers in their own city (Pl. *Lg.* 841D–E).

The language of these provisions is most eloquent. On the one hand, in a superlative city, sex is a matter of individual excellence. Whatever makes you inferior to yourself (*hēttōn heautou*), or softens you, or places you in the position of a female must be banned. On the other hand, pleasures and desires are sensations, caused by physical matters (moistures, semen, food) that flow through the organs and the limbs. All this corporeal stuff is a given. It cannot be abolished or denied. It can be channeled, however, in different directions. Pleasures are endowed with a strength that cannot be underestimated, but must be trained, increased, or diffused. Gymnastic, *ponoi*, helps redistribute the “force of pleasures.”

These are not ornamental metaphors. Since Plato's argument starts on the high ground of *aretē*, we might expect purely moral and political considerations. And yet what he tells us about is anatomy, physiology, and fitness. This attention to the literal montage of the argument speaks to a phenomenological sensibility. If we read Plato through the language of Martin Heidegger, we learn that we have been thrown into the world—and into a body. Like everything contingent, our human, gendered, and more or less healthy incorporation defies us constantly. Shall we just let go and depend upon our humors and drives? Shall we run after our basic instincts? If we read Plato with the thought of Maurice Merleau-Ponty in the background, we learn that, far from determining mechanically the use we can make of our organs and members, our body is eminently plastic. *Ta erōtika* involve glancing and ogling; touching, caressing, and kissing the surface; then something happens under the skin, setting in motion the hydraulic system that makes up our digestive and reproductive apparatus. It is not because a shape is visible, the skin is tangible, and we are a fabric of tissues and vessels that the functioning of all this equipment should be impervious to consciousness, intentions, and transformations. If only we apply the

resources of *ponos* to the machinery that, following the *Timaeus*, the gods once designed for us, we can make the best of it—instead of yielding to the insatiable nature of desire. We are moral shape-shifters. Let us work out!

Under the magnifying glass of an endlessly contemporary philosopher, *erōs* becomes a morally and politically significant experience. And yet it appears to bridge values *and things*, in a pervasive materialism. Yes: as Socrates claimed for the first time, in the imminence of his death, “we are our *psuchē*.” Yes: the happiness of a city depends upon the superior quality of its citizens. But the quality of a person is at stake in his, and also her, erotic life. That erotic life has to do with the dictates of the law, with the habits acquired through education, and with the human body. The body has been assembled in a certain way, which creates constraints: the solid components occupy a position and possess a structure, the minute parts flow eagerly, even impetuously, through the pipes that connect the brain, the marrow, and the genitals.

Human morality has to take up the challenge of coping with all *that*. As long as we are alive on earth, Socrates claims, we inhabit a *sōma*, a body, which is just a *sēma*, a tomb. We live but a diminished life, since the only pure life is that of the immortal soul, once severed from its earthly dwelling. But the metaphorical tomb is not just a container. During our rather long, albeit temporary, daily life, it is with the intricacies, the complications and the erratic plumbing of that *sōma/sēma* that we have to deal. Plato's binary oppositions are misleadingly simple. In the dramatic setting of the *Phaedo*, while theorizing the opposition of body and soul, Socrates massages his legs, which, under the action of the hemlock, are becoming numb and cold—and he comments on the paradox of pleasure and pain. It is this experience in real time, therefore, that generates the theory, phenomenologically. More generally, the dialogues capture the challenge of philosophy: its recurrent event *en tois logois*, never its achievement. Before becoming dead, while we are still mortals, we linger on a threshold and our existence is constantly testing our ability to govern ourselves. Before we unglue ourselves from what will be just a corpse, we are obliged to perceive the world through the senses, and we constantly enjoy this—or not. *Hēdonē* is what we tend to wish spontaneously, and yet there is nothing more misleading than this immediate response. Pleasure can only be felt in contrast with pain; desire is insatiable. We have to negotiate with the appetites for food, drink and sex, which are impossible to fulfill and yet necessary to our survival; we have to choose between the false pleasures that seem to satisfy the craving of hunger, thirst, and arousal and the true pleasures that satiate our intellectual wishes. We have to exert control and do it

all the time, because the intestine, the uterus, the penis, and the semen follow their own timing.

Plato's dialogues, written in the fourth century bce, are generally seen as profoundly influenced by a form of knowledge that had been flourishing since the fifth century in the Hellenic world, especially in Athens: medicine. Theoretical and practical at the same time, based on general assumptions about the elementary components of living bodies and on empirical observations, medicine had defined itself as a specialized expertise: *technē iatrikē*. It was interested in tissues, textures, fluids, and conditions that affected the matter of the body, such as the cold and the hot, the humid and the dry. It was concerned with the alterations of balances, organs and limbs—not with the alleged influence of a divinity upon human health. *Technē iatrikē* defined itself as superior in truthfulness, precision, and effectiveness. A collection or corpus of treatises, conventionally called “Hippocratic,” includes numerous pieces that both explain why *iatrikē* is indeed a *technē* (*Ancient Medicine*) and explore different applications of such knowledge to certain kinds of illness or certain kinds of bodies, for instance those of women. This is a dedicated intelligence of the body, epistemologically assertive, and practiced for the most part by carefully trained experts. Its intellectual and institutional reality confers its claims a highly respected authority. Physicians know about the body at first hand, and they diffuse their knowledge.

The autonomy and prestige of a *technē* of the body, in the fifth century bce, is a fact that adds to the complexity of ancient erotic cultures.

Plato's dialogues are filled with arguments that can only have a medical provenance. The analogies between the body and the soul abound: think of rhetoric as a therapy in the *Phaedrus* (270B–D), of dialectic as purgation in the *Sophist* (230C), of the phenomenology of aesthetic pleasure, described as a swelling and an inflammation in Book 10 of the *Republic*, or of the elenchus as midwifery in the *Theaetetus*. The *Timaeus* describes the generation of the cosmos and of human beings in terms that are similar to some Hippocratic theories. More to the point, in the *Symposium*, a dialogue on *erōs*, one of the speakers, Eryximachos, is a physician. The other symposiasts also refer to medical knowledge—from Aristophanes, whose speech is all about nicks, tucks, and grafts (by divine surgeons), to Agathon the tragic poet, who sings the praise of Eros as delicate and soft. Ultimately the speeches of the *Symposium* end with Diotima's and her gynecology of the soul: because it is giving birth to *logoi*, philosophy requires beauty, like procreation. The soul is a feminine body. In the polyphony of the *Symposium*, acts and positions hardly matter. None of these panegyrics of love between males ever mentions anal penetration. On the

contrary, physical attributes such as beauty, softness, or smoothness play a crucial role. What matters is sensuality.

The Focus on the Body

The Hippocratic corpus displays theories of anatomy, physiology, and sexuality. The genital apparatus of the female and of the male are analogous: the womb has the same shape as the penis; the vagina corresponds to the foreskin. They also function in a similar fashion: the neck of the uterus emits a seminal fluid, exactly like the penis. Pleasure accompanies this emission, in both bodies. Sexual difference is connected to generation. So too is eroticism. Gender is a quality that can be more or less marked, on a continuum that goes from extreme femininity to extreme masculinity. This quality characterizes an individual from the instant the embryo is conceived. What we call biological sex is the result of the mixing of the seminal emissions from both parents. The female and the male bodies produce analogous fluids which convey life and the image of the parents. Each of these fluids is, in turn, gendered: it contains a weak/feminine component as well as a strong/masculine component. In coition the four components of the two fluids combine in various proportions, so that six different sexual identities will take form. When the stronger/male semen from both parents prevails, the baby will be hyper-masculine; when the weaker/female semen from both parents is more abundant, then a hyper-feminine female will be born. When the stronger/male semen from the father combines with the weaker/female semen from the mother and dominates it, a slightly less virile male will be conceived; vice versa, when the weaker/female semen from the mother overpowers the stronger/male semen from the father, a bolder female will be born. The predominance of the stronger/male semen from the mother upon the weaker/female semen from the father will produce an effeminate boy; reciprocally, the preponderance of the weaker/female semen from the father on stronger/male semen from the mother will cause the birth of a masculine girl (*On Generation* 6; cf. *On Regimen* 1.25–9). The Hippocratic texts do not expand on the subjective awareness of gender identity; neither do they articulate femininity, virility, effeminacy, or an androgynous appearance to sexual preferences.

The most ambitious theory of gender and sexuality can be found in Aristotle's biological works, especially the *Generation of Animals*. Aristotle refutes the Hippocratic belief that females and males produce analogous seminal fluids. Framed in an elegant theory of life,

nutrition, and procreation, the Aristotelian vision of the sexes can be synthesized as follows: living beings are not immortal, this is why they reproduce themselves; the most complex among them do so through coition, which requires sexual difference (whereas simpler animals and plants are born spontaneously); sexual difference separates the bearer of the principle of form and life (the male) from the bearer of the principle of matter (the female); these two principles cooperate in the sexual act, to which animals are attracted because of pleasure; the principle of form sets in motion the maternal matter, so that a living body will take shape. The offspring will replicate, more or less faithfully, the form of the father.

The corporeal vehicles of the principles of form and matter are, respectively, male sperm and menstrual blood. It is not, however, the physical mixture of the fluids involved that causes the conception of a living being, but the action of the male principle upon the maternal material. This invisible process resembles a technical production: an artisan uses his instruments to make an object he has in mind, out of the stuff appropriate to that particular fabrication. A male does the same out of the stuff provided by the female. The nature of the sperm is consistent with the function of generation. Animals procreate in order to keep their species immortal. Procreation extends the purpose of survival beyond the individual. Individuals remain alive by eating, digesting, and feeding their flesh with the product of digestion. Digestion is a process of concoction occurring naturally in the stomach; its outcome is a dense liquid, full of vital heat: blood. Blood is what brings nourishment everywhere in the body. But it is usually produced in excess. The sperm is nothing but blood that has not been distributed through the body but that, thanks to the male's natural heat, has been cooked some more. The semen is overcooked blood: it is white and frothy, not red and thick, simply because it contains a greater amount of warm air (*pneuma*). Females, because they lack vital heat, fail to bring their extra blood to that superior level of concoction, hence the monthly discharge. Insofar as their bodies are poorly endowed with vital heat, all females are inferior to their corresponding males. This defect is congenital. Females are born because of a weakness of the father at the moment of coition: then the principle of form deviates from the accomplishment of its natural mission, which would be to replicate the paternal species and its individual characters. A female is the first step toward monstrosity.

Aristotle's biology moves away from the bilateral, although asymmetrical, views of sex and gender found in Hippocratic medicine. There cannot be two seminal fluids but only one semen: male sperm, which conveys the *eidos*. There must be, somewhere, some inert and passive material, apt to receive that *eidos*. The female body is the

place where the material can be found in complex animals. The female womb is the container where embryological transformations occur: if this same body had the ability to produce a fecund substance, Aristotle argues, it would also be able to engender by itself. Since, however, this does not happen, it is evident that the female must be impotent and needs its generative potentiality to be activated by an *archē kinēseōs*, a principle of movement. Female blood morphs into an embryo in the same way milk is transformed into cheese, when the yeast initiates a process of coagulation, or as a piece of wood is made into a chair, when handled by a carpenter. These technical analogies betray a radical turn: *phusis* functions like *technē*, in the same metaphysically patterned manner. Nature must be thought of in terms of matter versus form. Matter, by definition, cannot move itself spontaneously: this is why it is absurd to speak of a feminine semen. Aristotle's biology introduces a new paradigm, which will have a long history in western medicine (Sissa 1992).

One of the most significant consequences of this metaphysical shift is to anchor the experience of pleasure and desire to the fabrication of life. All complex living beings share the same end: the preservation of the species. This is why the sexes exist in the first place, as *archai tēs genēseōs*, principles of generation. To situate Aristotle in the narrative of Greek sexuality, let us say that, for him, Eros—the Eros who brings together men and boys—is no longer the most ancient of the gods, or the most beautiful, excellent or young, as Plato's Agathon, and his enthusiastic symposiasts, had claimed. As Diotima argued, *erōs* serves the purpose of *genēsis*. Aristotle agrees that *genēsis* is the very imperative of nature. But Aristotle's nature, in its metaphysical dualism, involves the body: animals engender not discourses, but in the flesh. A defining *telos*, *genēsis* creates a powerful normative model of sex following nature, as opposed to erotic practices and inclinations that would be independent of any procreative outcome. Same-sex desires and pleasures exist, of course, but marginally and as more or less consolidated habits. Whereas in Plato's corpus, as we have seen, we find either dithyrambic praise or politically motivated blame for males loving each other, Aristotle briefly mentions their preferences.

And yet it is in the *Problemata*, a collection of physical questions produced in Aristotle's school, that we encounter the only definition and detailed examination of the desire and pleasure that are felt in non-procreative sexual acts between two males. Whereas so many texts, literary or philosophical, mention these acts, *Problemata* 4.26 engages in a unique discussion of their anatomical circumstances, physiological adaptations, and erotic consequences. The argument is centered on the body: it explains what has to happen so that a man may experience *hēdonē* in a specific place, the anus, which is not

dedicated to generation. But, since the body is envisioned here not as machinery, but as a locus of sensations, namely pleasure, its fabric is plastic and malleable. The habit of pleasure can bring about a second nature. Let us look closely at this piece of rudimentary phenomenology.

In naturally effeminate men (*phusei thēludriai*), the tubes that carry semen to the penis and the testicles are obstructed, either because of a congenital malformation or because these men are eunuchs or impotent. When presented with a perception or thought, that area experiences the desire to be rubbed. The itch is the model for erotic pleasure: it is an enjoyment that culminates in the expulsion of a fluid full of hot air, which was trapped in the body against nature. The use of the anus for erotic purposes does not fulfill the natural task of procreation, but if this act is possible as an erotic act—if anal penetration can be pleasurable and can be desired—then there must be an explanation. How can sexual pleasure shift to that area? By an innate disposition, but also by growing accustomed to it, men come to desire passivity as though it were natural. Habit becomes nature. This artificial nature, however, is also a modification of the body: the pleasure of those who acquire the desire to be penetrated occurs because they feel it in a certain place and secrete semen in a particular fashion. Because the anus cannot expel the seminal fluid vigorously and completely, these men feel a continuous, insatiable lust, as do women. It is the flowing of semen and its accumulation that create the itch and shape their sensuality ([Arist.] *Probl.* 4.26, 879^b34–5).

Such a subtle attempt to question how a certain kind of sexual experience happens; to define the terms of the question (it is a matter of pleasure and desire); to explain causes and effects (channels are obstructed; a habit is acquired) could be taken as a sample of a peripheral, specialized form of knowledge that has very little bearing on Greek culture at large. But this text fits exceedingly well the allusive and fragmentary discourse on same-sex love that we may encounter in oratory, comedy, or Plato's dialogues. It is not only compatible with that kind of evidence, but it fills the gaps. A different mapping of pleasure; the intensity of that pleasure, which is due to its non phallic rhythm; the corporeal reality of those other channels of the semen and those other localizations of desire; the similarity between that pleasure and the one felt in a woman's body: all this provides a connective tissue among the scattered components of the Greek representation of homosexuality. Aeschines' focus on having sex like a woman, *and* enjoying that sex too much, in his speech *Against Timarchos*; Socrates and Callicles' conversation on the insatiable itch of the *kinaidos* in Plato's *Gorgias*; Aristophanes' rendition of homosexuals as effeminate in the eyes of the Athenian, popular beholder: these

fragments of an invidious erotic discourse fall into place (Sissa 2008; Hubbard 1998). Reciprocally, we may better understand why the praise of love between males carefully avoids the connection of excessive pleasure and femininity, as happens among the friends who convene at Agathon's home in Plato's *Symposium*. None of them, we have seen, ever mentions penetration or anal pleasure.

To know the body, to try to figure out the locations of sexual desire and pleasure, to question the causes of sexual difference and procreation was a crucial component of Greek erotic culture. That kind of knowledge bore an epistemic status, it targeted a certain level of credibility, intended to be superior to other forms of knowledge. Medical texts invite us to replace the belief in healing rituals and mythological explanations with a more legitimate belief: a belief in what the physician and the authorial voice are not simply claiming, but justifying. That kind of knowledge grounds its authority on first-person hands-on experience: observing, measuring, pulping, probing, and handling. Medicine is visual, of course, but also haptic: it is more generally sensuous, insofar as it makes the body touchable, sectionable, smelly. The tangible body is what sets the medical intent apart from other forms of discourse and representation. Sex is touch: kisses, caresses, embraces, penetrations are all declinations of one sense, the only one that resides all over the skin. Medicine takes it from there.

By using the probe, a physician could check that, in the vagina of healthy virgins, there was no hymen. When Soranus of Ephesus (second century ce) argues against the claim that “a thin membrane grows across the vagina, dividing it, and that this membrane causes pain when it bursts in defloration or when menstruation occurs too quickly” (*Gynecology* 1.17), he grounds his argument upon the dissection of corpses, but also upon his experience in treating living patients. A lead probe was inserted into the female genitals, where it would encounter—or fail to encounter—an obstacle. It is a mistake (*pseudos*), Soranus affirms with confidence, to say that the anatomy of young women naturally includes a virginal membrane, whereas in some cases that same membrane can become thicker, thus causing an abnormal condition called *atrësia*, imperforation. Imperforation occurs, Soranus points out, but if what causes imperforation were just a more substantial version of a normal appendage, then a tenuous hymen would be found in all sexually inexperienced women, and always at the same place. But this is not the case. It is the probe that reveals the variable location of the extraneous, solid tissue that may obstruct the womanly sinus (between the labia, half-way through the vagina, or across the mouth of the womb). The use of a tactile device therefore helps us understand that there is no physiological seal in the

feminine body. There can only be a rare, and always pathological, anomaly that must be medically treated (Sor. *Gyn.* 1.17).

Soranus refines a traditional practice of medicine. Hippocratic physicians had never observed nor touched a material support of virginity, only occasional cases of imperforation. They too handled the invisible parts of the female body by introducing an instrument, or their own fingers:

If the woman does not receive the seed, even though her menses come naturally, there will be a membrane [*mēninx*] in the front. You will know this if you touch the obstacle [*problēma*] with your finger. Make a pessary of pine resin and copper particles ... It is better to remove the membrane. (Hippocratic corpus, *Diseases of Women* 1.20, trans. Kathleen Whiteley)

Already in the Hippocratic corpus the medical gaze was assisted by a hands-on approach. By inserting a finger, the physician or his helper could check the state of the womb. The sexual act itself was considered therapeutic; a number of gynecological interventions were similar to penetration. Pessaries applied to the cervix and fumigations were expected to act upon the uterus, because they helped to replace it where it should be, exactly as coition did. It was all about making the flesh softer or firmer, laxer or compact, so that the “mouth” (*stōma*) of the uterus could receive the semen and close up, tightly, on its content (Sissa 1990; Dean-Jones 1996; King 1998).

Of course, the project of knowing the body in its most concrete material texture allows for mistakes. All this manipulation is framed by assumptions, expectations, preexisting paradigms, epistemological obstacles. Even the most positive fact is constructed. And yet not all constructions are the same. Apollon's surgery in Aristophanes' genealogy of Eros in Plato's *Symposium* might mimic the language of Hippocrates, but the bisection of a sphere and the displacement of the genitals from back to front is not a procedure we could find in *Maladies I*. The mimicry is a parody.

Doing Justice to Michel Foucault

From this brief aperçu we can now draw a few methodological considerations. Like any narrative, a history of sexuality has to do with times and spaces. Time and space are the condition of possibility for an experience, and they generate manners and values. A history of sexuality tells us how values and manners vary in social environments that are, obviously, different. Social history, intellectual history,

cultural history: even at a glance, we have to capture twists and turns, contrasts and mimicry, norms and parody. We have to start from this very large picture: when, where, and how people were expected to live their erotic lives and think and speak about them. Who would live what kind of erotic life? Failure to chart multiple chronotopes and social niches leads to mistaken perspectives.

One such mistake is simplistic constructionism. This claims that gender is a cultural artifact; more to the point, that what we call “sex” exists only as a province of that vast construction site that is gender. *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*, by Thomas Laqueur (1990), laid out the manifesto of this thesis.

I want to propose instead that in these pre-Enlightenment texts, and even some later ones, *sex*, or the body, must be understood as an epiphenomenon, while gender, what we would take as a cultural category, was primary or “real.” ... Sex before the Seventeenth century therefore, was still a sociological and not an ontological category. (Laqueur 1990, 8)

In response to this I am arguing that there was indeed in ancient cultures a specialized discourse, intent on defining, experimenting, explaining sex. As historians, we can see through that intent and easily detect the cultural provenance of its presuppositions, its language and its normative effects. This is our job. But this should not make us blind to the ambitions of such a discourse, taken in its own terms. Of course, as a matter of principle, there is no “sex” without the set-up of gender. Science always exists in a social context; any research about females and males connects with women and men, as they live in society. But this is always true.

An analogous mistake is holistic constructionism. This claims that a culture—be it Greek or Athenian—is organized around a system of norms, which is one. The work of David Halperin offers a sample of this monolithic vision of *the pederastic model*.

The application of “homosexuality” (and “heterosexuality”) in a substantive or normative sense to sexual expression in antiquity is not advised. Greek and Roman men generally understood sex to be defined in terms of sexual penetration and phallic pleasure, whether the sexual partners were two males, two females, or one male and one female. The physical act of sex itself required, in their eyes, a polarization of the sexual partners into the categories of penetrator and penetrated as well as a corresponding polarization of sexual roles into “active” and “passive.” Those roles in turn were correlated with superordinate and subordinate social status, with masculine and feminine gender styles, and with adulthood and adolescence. Phallic insertion functioned as a marker of male

precedence; it also expressed social domination and seniority. The isomorphism of sexual, social, gender, and age roles made the distinction between “activity” and “passivity” paramount for categorizing sexual acts and actors of either gender; the distinction between homosexual and heterosexual contacts could still be invoked for certain purposes, but it remained of comparatively minor taxonomic and ethical significance. (Halperin 1996, 720–1)

In response to this, I would argue that we have to rediscover where sex belongs—in discourses about the body—and we have to understand how not only multiple, but conflicting languages could compete in shaping ancient sexuality. Plato, for instance, stages the conversations and the intermingling of Athenian intellectuals and their glamorous foreign guests, such as Protagoras of Abdera or Gorgias of Leontini. This was a little clan of wealthy and sophisticated men who explored, around and after Socrates, a world of unconventional, counterintuitive, and provocative ideas. Agathon's salon does not offer a sample of the mentality of Athenian society at large. In this environment Agathon himself appears as a most glamorous host, but, out there, on the stage of popular theater, in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae*, the same man could be caricatured as an effeminate in drag. Like Inlaw, the character who impersonates the ordinary Athenian in the play, one would laugh at him, feel utterly confused about his gender, and see him as liable to anal penetration (Sissa, 2012). There is no unique pederastic model. Love was seen through the prism of praise or blame: praise encompassed both partners in a couple, with no attention paid to domination, fixed sex roles, effeminacy or sodomy; blame, mostly mockery, focused on all of the above. In an attempt to replace blame and praise with observation and causal understanding, the Aristotelian author of the *Problemata* endeavored to make sense of what happens. We should understand these different discourses on their own terms and epistemological strategies.

Unfortunately, the statements I have quoted are now familiar to all the scholars of ancient sexuality but miss the point of what *erōs* was about in ancient Greece. Let me make myself crystal clear. Nobody, except Roman bishops or right-wing pedagogues, can deny that gender identities are shaped by education, legal systems, moral and aesthetic expectations. Nobody can reasonably disagree with Joan Scott's classical definition of gender as a useful category (Scott 1986, 1053–75). My point is that, especially in classics, an influential strain of scholarship has taken literally, and ultimately betrayed, the example of Michel Foucault, author of the *History of Sexuality*. Foucault has been taken literally in his definition of sex as a byproduct of the *dispositif de sexualité*, “apparatus of sexuality” (Foucault 1976, 91 and

passim); in his alleged prohibition to use the notion of sexuality and homosexuality in premodern societies; in his claim that activity versus passivity is the only pertinent dichotomy that organizes erotic practices in ancient societies (Foucault 1984a, 207–24). Foucault has been betrayed insofar as his actual work on Greece and Rome led him to modify the radical historicism laid out in that short, polemical and programmatic essay that was *The Will to Know*.

In conclusion, I would like to do justice to Foucault: not to the hasty nominalist who wanted to settle his account with psychoanalysis, Freudian and Lacanian, but, first, to the late-comer to classical studies who opened his *Use of Pleasure* with a transcultural definition of sexuality and a warning. Here is the definition: “The project was a history of sexuality as experience—if, by ‘experience,’ we mean the correlation, in a culture, between domains of knowledge, types of normativity, and forms of subjectivity” (Foucault 1984a, 10, my translation). And here is the warning: the coinage of the term “sexuality” in the nineteenth century was a fact that one should neither underestimate nor overinterpret (Foucault 1984a, 9). Second, I would like to do justice to the original philosopher who wrote a highly ambitious methodological book, meant to transform the way we do history: *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (*L'Archéologie du savoir* = Foucault 1969). That Foucault, paradoxically, offers the best antidote to the flaws of the *History of Sexuality* and, as a consequence, to the oversimplifications of our Foucauldian colleagues.

Why? Because in that book Foucault argued that, instead of searching for unifying descriptions, linear causes, or intellectual genealogies, we should map the multiple places where, in a society, knowledge is produced and from where it is spread, diffused, taught.

The history of a concept is not, purely and simply, the history of its progressive refinement, of its continuously growing rationality, of its level of abstraction. It is rather the history of its different fields of constitution and validity; of the successive rules of its usage; of the multiple theoretical milieus in which the elaboration of such a concept was attempted and accomplished. (Foucault 1969, 11; my translation and my emphasis)

Foucault's concern for thinking in the plural was so strong at that point that he could criticize himself for what he thought was a potential misunderstanding. The concept of *epistēmē*, underpinning *Words and Things* (*Les Mots et les choses* = Foucault 1966), he feared, might be construed as meaning a “cultural totality” (*totalité culturelle*), or a systematic vision of European culture (Foucault 1969, 27). He was keen on correcting that. A culture had to be understood, he wrote, as a fragmented and diversified space. History had to capture “the

hard work of liberty” (*le dur travail de la liberté*: Foucault 1969, 23). To do this was to identify specific institutional times and spaces where and when diverse “enunciations,” thus practices of discourse, were made possible. The reconstruction of an *epistēmē* would get the picture of that diversity. It was the project of a sociology of knowledge.

In the *History of Sexuality*, that very project went amiss. What we have is, first, in 1976, a provocative essay, *The Will to Know* (*La Volonté de savoir*), outlining the plan of a history of modern sexuality, from the sixteenth to the nineteenth and the twentieth century, which never came to fruition; and, second, in 1984, two volumes on antiquity, *The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self* (Foucault 1984a and 1984b), which deliver a history of ideas based almost exclusively on philosophical sources, except for a couple of chapters on Pseudo-Demosthenes and Artemidorus Daldianus. This has nothing to do with the initial sketch of the *History of Sexuality*—a deviation that makes for an infinitely more interesting outcome—but it is also at odds with the ambitions of the archeological approach. While reading *The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self*, one would be hard pressed to find a sociologically sophisticated attention focused on “multiple theoretical milieus”; one would emerge instead with the impression that there is one paradigm of the only erotic experience that mattered: pederasty. A “cultural totality” is precisely what a bona fide reader discovers through this elegant and influential prose, where the variety of social backgrounds, intellectual environments, and epistemological enterprises fails to transpire. There are no surroundings, no situations, no locations—only texts. No theater, no political arenas, no judicial battles, no medical practices: no *lieux de savoir* the relative power of which would be set in perspective. The landscape of Athens and Rome is as flat as a page.

In the *History of Madness*, Foucault had gone for the theories *and the institutions* responsible for defining reason, normalcy and folly (instead of lingering on Erasmus' *Praise of Folly*, for instance, or on the philosophical and literary history of melancholy). What if, similarly, an archaeology of sexuality had gone straight to the practices of discourse that, most authoritatively, provide its very definition, in Greek or Roman culture? These are not philosophy, but medicine and biology. Not because they tell the truth, of course—the history of science is a history of mistakes—but because that is the place where a set of observations, explanations, and experiments were conducted, in contrast with traditional approaches. That practice and that epistemology were the place where the body was emerging as an autonomous and special object of inquiry.

It is now time to rethink the relevance of the body. We have to understand the autonomy, the authority, and the pervasive

exemplarity of medicine. The work of Anastasia-Erasmia Peponi on Plato's use of medical language in the *Phaedrus* (Peponi 2002) and that of Brooke Holmes on medical arguments in tragedy (Holmes 2010) help us greatly. Their claims about the significance of the body resonate with what I have argued in *Sex and Sensuality in the Ancient World* (Sissa 2008) and with what I am arguing here.

History of Sexuality: A New Discipline and Its Canon

Counterfactually speaking, had Foucault applied his archeological method to ancient sexuality, we would not be here, having to swim upstream, in order to restate the obvious. We have to replace the knowledge of the body where it belongs: in those medical texts, from the Hippocratic corpus to Aristotle's biological works and the Aristotelian *Problemata*, to Galen and Soranus. And there should we place sexuality. To borrow Foucault's language, those are the “fields of [a concept's] constitution and validity.” There can we find the rules about how to use it. Those are “the multiple theoretical milieus, in which the elaboration of such a concept was attempted and accomplished” (Foucault 1969, 11; my translation). If, as the “Introduction” to the *Use of Pleasure* so reasonably states, the experience of sexuality amounts to the correlation, in a given culture, between domains of knowledge, types of normativity, and forms of subjectivity (Foucault, 1984a, 10), then in Greek culture which are the “domains of knowledge” that would come across as the most consequential in their connection to “types of normativity and forms of subjectivity”? Would not they be the “domains of knowledge” centered on the body, since they prescribe, more pervasively and authoritatively than any other discourse, what desire is, how best to experience pleasure and why, and what ought to be done in the practice of sex? Were not those thoughts infinitely more influential and powerful in shaping the erotic lives of ordinary people than Plato's dialogues, the content of which was so paradoxical and the circulation of which was limited, if not confidential?

The work of Michel Foucault has indubitably had a unique impact on the consolidation of gender studies, queer theory, feminist theory, and cultural history (or, on the French academic map, in the anthropology of ancient societies), into a constellation that we can call “history of sexuality.” But the same canonical, if not canonized, work (think of Halperin's un-ironical *Saint Foucault*) has established a set of

principles—and a hierarchy of relevant texts, to be read in view of those principles. These are, in brief: sex is manufactured by the apparatus of sexuality; it is inappropriate to speak about sexuality and homosexuality in premodern societies; only the polarity of activity and passivity organizes the erotic experience in those societies. These principles, however, are not compatible with what we learn from the domains of knowledge that are focused on the body. And they crumble as soon as we pay attention to the *poikilia* of a culture as socially and intellectually diverse as that of classical Athens, or Rome.

This is not to say that medicine and biology alone can make up the new discipline that is the history of sexuality. But there are two compelling reasons for reorganizing the canon of the history of sexuality.

First, the physical, corporeal qualities involved in pleasure and desire find in the medical writers of the fifth century their *definitions* and the oppositions that organize them in a binary logic. In the fourth century Aristotelian biology, including the all-important *Problemata*, will contribute even more to the systematization of those qualities in a coherent grid.

Second, that knowledge spreads into other genres of discourse, such as tragedy, comedy, and philosophy. The language in which illness or madness, anatomy and physiology are theorized moves from the Hippocratic corpus onto the stage, where Herakles' fury, or Phaidra's lovesickness—are framed in medically plausible fashions. This is much more than a fertile field for intertextual *trouvailles*: it is the symptom of cultural osmosis between a domain of knowledge that stands as a reference and an array of other theoretical milieus, which absorb and recontextualize its parlance. Medicine travels into Plato's dialogues, where analogies between the therapy of the body and the therapy of the soul abound and where we can occasionally encounter a physician such as Eryximachos in the *Symposium*. In a group of poets and philosophers about *erōs*, Eryximachos shows how a medical voice could strike its own note (Edelstein, 1945). What is distinctive is the focus on the desires of the body: repletion and evacuation. The very definition of medicine, for him, hinges on that (Pl. *Smp.* 186C). The point here is that, by his simple presence at the drinking party, Eryximachos—who is cast a bit like Docteur Cottard, dining chez the Verdurins, in Proust's *Recherche*—shows just how medical knowledge, *iatrikē epistēmē*, is respected and special. Philosophical discourse relies on that knowledge. Aristophanes' speech can be seen as hinting at the same kind of expertise. “This Platonic parody of an Aristophanic parody of Hippocratic discourse is seen to be important evidence for the dissemination of medical material in the late fifth and early fourth century, and a demonstration of the extent to which this pervaded

intellectual discourse” (Craik 2001).

Plato's “school,” the Old Academy, took a Skeptical turn in Cicero's days, and thus it failed to produce a body of positive erudition. On the contrary, Plato's best pupil, Aristotle, endeavored to formalize, by and large, the main tenets of Greek culture. Relying critically upon opinions and experimental research, Aristotle's school spurred the accumulation of encyclopedic knowledge, which would set a paradigm for sciences and philosophy until the early modern period. This school was indeed a productive *lieu de savoir*, a mighty theoretical milieu, where concepts underwent rethinking and elaboration. Already in antiquity, its influence was immense. Let me defer on this point to the authoritative *cri du coeur* of a dedicated scholar, Philip van der Eijk, who exposes the disciplinary conventions that, by separating the history of medicine from philosophy, still encourage incomplete and biased understandings of Aristotelianism (van der Eijk 2005). Scholars are only beginning to take seriously the massive amount of work conducted by Peripatetics such as Theophrastus, Strato, the author of the *Problemata*, or that of the *Anonymus Londinensis*. We have only just begun to realize the extent of Aristotle's impact upon Galen and, before him, on his precursors in Hellenistic medicine—especially Praxagoras, Erasistratus, Herophilus, and the Empiricists. And we still have so much to discover from Aristotle's ancient commentators, such as Alexander of Aphrodisias, Themistius, Simplicius, John Philoponus, not to mention Nemesius of Emea or Meletius of Sardes. “This is a very rich and challenging field,” writes Philip van der Eijk, “in which there is still an enormous amount of work to do, especially when artificial boundaries between medicine and philosophy are crossed and interaction between the two domains is considered afresh” (van der Eijk 2005, 14–17; quotation at p. 16). Reception studies have an exciting future.

The interdisciplinarity of Aristotelian thought should also be brought to bear on our remapping of ancient erotic culture. Aristotle harmonizes his biological theory of sex (as a means of *phusis* to accomplish its end, procreation) with his ethics of sexuality, so lopsided toward heterosexuality. The rare passages on same-sex love in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (7.5.1148^b–9a; 8.4, 1157^a) should be read against the background of the treatise *On the Generation of Animals*, five books entirely focused on sexual difference. The backbone of the argument is the purpose of *phusis*: the sexes exist, as we have seen, in order to grant immortality of the species to complex animals. This substantial, compelling context explains the nonchalance of Aristotle's allusions to same-sex lust and love. The hegemony and diffusion of Aristotelian thought in antiquity should give us confidence to draw upon the *Problemata*. This is an encyclopedia in itself. Minute

questions about the smallest details of anatomy and physiology result in a relentless effort, in order to square what might appear to be mysterious anomalies with the paradigm of hot/cold, dry/humid, young/old, female/male, and so on. Book 4 should be considered as a companion to ancient sexuality, or as a grammar of the ancient language of desire and pleasure. We have seen its most detailed account of how desire takes different directions—toward different individuals and in the body itself.

Aristotelian biology, as van der Eijk argues, circulated in medical circles and thus contributed to medical theories, as it did in the case of Galen. We can therefore extend to Aristotle the same considerations that are pertinent for the Hippocratic tradition. This is not only a self-defined, autonomous domain of knowledge; it is also a paradigmatic form of inquiry, offering a touchstone for all sorts of reflections on health, body, and soul. Trust in the authority of medicine builds on empiricism. This authority reaches out—far beyond philosophical schools and urban intellectuals. Physicians travel, visit patients, tell them what to do and why, in an idiom that has to be understandable. They corroborate, for ordinary people, the awareness that the bleeding, aching, itching, hiccupping, sneezing body is the locus of pain, pleasure, and desire. To recognize the intricacies of metaphorical transfers, allusions, borrowings, parodies, we have to admit that, in the fifth and fourth centuries, there was *somewhere* a research project that was going on. At the core of ancient erotic culture there was a stock of ideas ready to use when talking about sex—sexual orientation, sexual identity. It would be hasty and, after all, unwarranted to claim that sex was just the epiphenomenon of gender. What we see is an effort to piece together the experience of pleasure, the evidence of desire, and a general model of the body. The outcome is a notion of nature flexible enough to accommodate habit, and yet materialistic enough to change the tissues and their irrigation. That language percolates into fiction and philosophy, following selective paths that we still have to chart.

Guide to Further Reading

Impressive scholarship has been produced on theories of the female body, procreation, and sexual difference in ancient medicine and biology. Path-breaking works include: Gourevitch 1984, Rousselle 1993, Dean-Jones 1996, King 1998. My first contribution to this field was a co-authored book: Campese, Manuli, and Sissa 1983. Paola Manuli, who had pioneered a critical reading of the gynecological

texts in the Hippocratic corpus, Galen, and Soranus (Manuli 1980), died prematurely in 1992. I have continued to work on these questions in Sissa 1990, 1992, and 2008. Aristotle's theory of generation has drawn quite a bit of philosophical interest: Gotthelf and Lennox 1987, Cooper 1988, Freeland 1998, Henry 2006.

The prevalent constructionist approach to same-sex love has encouraged little attention to its corporeal dimensions, but a few treatments of the subject can be found in Porter 1999 and Brooten 1998, especially in Chapter 5, "Women with Masculine Desires: Medical Treatments" (pp. 150–81), in which Brooten criticizes Michel Foucault's neglect of the medicalization, already in antiquity, of same-sex love. On the methodological controversy (on which I have argued in Sissa 2008), I would recommend Habinek 1997, Hubbard 1998, and Davidson 2001.

For an introduction to the scholarship, the thorough essay by Arthur-Katz 1989 remains extremely useful. In a critical overview of history of sexuality, Richlin 2012 maps the major advances, trends, and disagreements that occurred in the field over the last 40 years.

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Chapter 17

Bewitched, Bothered, and Bewildered

Radcliffe G. Edmonds III

O *iunx*, drag this man to my house.
As this wax doll I, with the demon's power, do melt,
So may he melt with *erōs*, the Mydian Delphis, at once.
And, as whirls round this bronze *rhombos* from Aphrodite,
So too may he whirl round to my doors.
O *iunx*, drag this man to my house.

Theocritus, *Idyll* 2.27–32

Introduction

The betrayed Simaetha, in Theocritus' famous poem, turns to an elaborate magical spell to try to get her lover Delphis back. Her spell is a literary pastiche of many of the familiar elements of erotic magic that appear in the Greco-Roman tradition, but Theocritus' poem sheds light upon the situations and the ways in which erotic magic, real or imaginary, was conceived in the ancient Greco-Roman world.

Magic, as a general rule, is an extra-ordinary practice, a measure one turns to when ordinary solutions are insufficient for handling the problems of life. An ancient Greek or Roman would resort to magic either to supplement his or her more mundane efforts, as a kind of hedging of bets, or after the normal solutions had already failed. Since the field of erotic interactions is so unpredictable, so competitive, and so vital to the whole range of people in the society, a great deal of evidence attests to the fact that the ancient Greeks and Romans not only imagined magical solutions to their erotic problems, but actually engaged in magical practices in the attempt to resolve them.

While Richard Gordon has argued that the true home of magic in the ancient world is in the imaginary rather than in the practices of Greeks and Romans, the evidence that survives for modern scholars is not limited to literary flights of fancy that promise characters a nearly unlimited power to fulfill their desires; nor were accusations of bewitchment by envious rivals or seductive lovers grounded purely in the imagination. Real people turned to practices that they themselves considered magical in the attempt to achieve their goals in the erotic realm.

The evidence for such practices comes from both epigraphic and literary sources, since art and life are always inextricably intertwined. Lead curse tablets in which the wishes of the desperate are scrawled, intricately engraved gems and amulets whose materials and inscriptions symbolize the desired results, and elaborate formularies in which the recipes for performing magical rituals are collected by professional experts—all these are among the materials that provide direct evidence of magical practices, for erotic and other purposes. We also have literary attestations to some of these materials, representations of daily life aiming at verisimilitude, not fantastic fictions of super-powered creatures of the imagination. Of course, just as the magic of literature might be drawn from the practices of life, so too the magic of the imagination might inspire the practices, as practitioners sought to imitate the greatest magicians of legend. The epigraphic sources, in particular, provide insights into the lives of men and women in parts of society that rarely make it into the pages of the literary sources, giving voice to their hopes and fears and anxieties.

The types of erotic magic practiced may be divided according to the problems to which they are addressed. A number of magical practices are attested as solutions to what might be termed the technical difficulties associated with erotic interactions—issues of impotence, fertility, contraception, and even abortion. Beyond these physical problems, many of the magical practices are aimed at the social dynamics of the erotic relations. To handle competition with rivals, restraining curses could be employed; these would bind and hamper the activities of the competitor in the erotic arena in much the same way as binding curses would in other venues. Many spells are focused on retaining the affections of the target, preventing him or her from straying from an established relationship. Of course, one of the most crucial problems in love is always gaining the affections of the beloved, and a variety of types of obtaining spells could be used to inflict *erōs* on the beloved and to bring him or her to the lover, past all the obstacles, physical and social, that might be in the way. Since human relationships are always complex, the actual spells for which evidence survives do not fall neatly into these categories, but even the

spells that aim, for example, at retaining the beloved and restraining rivals can be understood as combinations of the types of spells analyzed here.

Technical Difficulties

The magical solutions for the technical difficulties associated with sex and reproduction are perhaps the simplest category of erotic magic for which evidence survives from the ancient world, although even these straightforward remedies are gendered, providing different kinds of solutions for the problems faced by men and women.

For men, there are a variety of recipes to address what would today be termed “erectile dysfunction”; these range from a preparation of honey and pepper smeared on one’s “business” (*PGM* 7.191–2) to Theophrastus’ amazing Indian herb (Thphr. *HP* 9.18.9), which guarantees as many erections as a man might want, up to 12 (one scientifically minded researcher, Theophrastus tells us, found that he could get as many as 70 before starting to ejaculate blood).¹ Of course, the dysfunction itself might have been caused by magic, either an antaphrodisiac *pharmakon* or a spell. Ovid (*Amores* 3.7.27–38) worries that some magic may have caused his episode of “languid loins,” while Encolpius, similarly afflicted, regains his potency from the incantations of an old witch (Petronius, *Satyricon* 131).

For women, magical charms can promise effective contraception, or even abortion, if the woman does not wish for a pregnancy.² But magic for enhancing fertility and for promoting conception and healthy delivery appears far more often, since reproduction was so important to the status and position of women within their families and communities, while at the same time pregnancy and childbirth represented some of the greatest hazards to women’s health and life. While many of these remedies no doubt remained unwritten traditions for women, some appear in the collections of the learned. Theophrastus (*HP* 9.18.5) lists plants that aid in the conception of a male or a female child. In his list of the useful parts of the hyaena, Pliny recommends the eye, in food with anise, as a cure for barrenness that would work in three days, while the sinews of the kidney, taken in wine with incense, would restore fertility damaged by witchcraft. Fat from the loins or the bones from the spine help a woman in labor, as does the right foot—although not the left foot, which could be fatal (Plin. *HN* 28.27.92, 102, 103).

Restraining Spells

While the remedies for technical difficulties are concerned mainly with physical performance, magic was also used to address more complicated social problems. Erotic relationships involve complicated social dynamics, and many different kinds of crises can arise that seem beyond the power of ordinary tactics to resolve. Although spells to obtain a desired person are perhaps the most dramatic, spells to retain the affections of a loved one and to restrain rivals make their appearance both in literature and in the epigraphic record.

The restraining spells may target either the rival, preventing him or her from engaging in erotic relations with the beloved, or the beloved, keeping him or her from a particular rival or any potential rivals. These spells, often found engraved on lead tablets buried in graves or deposited in wells, show marked similarities to other kinds of curse tablets, which are designed to hamper the performance of a rival in some other arena of competition. As Faraone 1991 has shown, such curses were employed in almost every arena of competition in the Greek and Roman world, from law courts to chariot races to the stage. In the context of erotic relationships, it is easy to see the appeal of a magical solution that could eliminate what might seem to the lover to be the primary obstacle to winning the beloved's affections: a rival with superior charms.

One basic form of ill wishing that could be used on a rival was *βασκανία* or *fascinatio*, what moderns refer to as the “evil eye.” Simply glancing in envy at another could be sufficient to bring the wished-for harm, to bind back the one who was excelling and thus outdoing the agent. Although various Greeks and Romans came up with rationalizations for how this act could work, they all explain the same basic phenomenon of the sidelong glance of envy—the indirect confrontation with a potential rival.³

While the envious glance associated with the evil eye is common enough (and even more easily imagined as a cause of one's own misfortune), it leaves little in the way of tangible evidence. Lead curse tablets, on the other hand, provide a durable witness to the rivalries that drove people in the ancient Greco-Roman world to engage in magical practices. A tablet dating from the fourth century bce, probably deposited in a grave, invokes the powers of the underworld to bind a certain Theodora and to prevent her from consummating a relationship with Charias.

I bind Theodora to remain unmarried to Charias, and I bind Charias to forget Theodora, and I bind Charias to forget ... Theodora and sex with Theodora. And just as this corpse lies useless, so may all

the words and deeds of Theodora be useless with regard to Charias and to the other people. I bind Theodora before Hermes of the underworld and before the unmarried and before Tethys. I bind everything, both her words and deeds toward Charias and toward other people, and her sex with Charias. (*DT* 68; trans. Gager 1992: 90)

The unknown agent performing the spell, presumably a woman who wants Charias for herself, wishes that Theodora be as incapable of having a sexual relation with Charias as the corpse into whose grave the tablet has been deposited. Theodora's words and deeds are to be bound by the powers of the underworld, which should thus prevent her from competing with the agent.

Other spells, rather than binding all the target's words and deeds, enumerate instead all the specific body parts to be bound and made useless for erotic activity. A lead curse tablet from a fourth-century bce deposit at Nemea repels one man, Euboles, from every bit of his beloved Aineas.

I turn away Euboles from Aineas, from his face, from his eyes, from his mouth, from his breasts, from his soul, from his belly, from his penis, from his anus, from his entire body. I turn away Euboles from Aineas. (*SEG* 30.353; trans. Gager 1992: 92)

Such enumerations of body parts are common in other curses, but, whereas curses for the law courts target the tongue or the mind of the opponent, erotic curses provide a whole map of the body that may be involved in erotic relations.

Retaining Spells

Although both men and women use spells to win the affections of a beloved by restraining rivals, women seem more often to be the agents in spells designed to preserve an existing erotic relationship and to protect it from outside influences. One example, particularly fascinating on account of its apparent amateur authorship and lack of formulaic patterns, is a lead tablet from a fourth-century bce grave near Pella in Macedonia.

Of Thetima and Dionysophon the ritual wedding and the marriage I bind by a written spell, as well as the marriage of all other women to him, both widows and maidens, but above all of Thetima; and I entrust this spell to Makron and to the *daimones*. And were I ever to unfold and read these words again after digging the tablet up, only then should Dionysophon marry, not before; may he indeed not take

another beside myself, but let me alone grow old by the side of Dionysophon and no one else. I implore you: have pity for Phila, dear *daimones*, for I am indeed bereft of all my dear ones and abandoned. But please keep this piece of writing for my sake so that these events do not happen and wretched Thetima perishes miserably; but let me become happy and blessed. (DTA 78; Voutiras 1998)

The writer, Phila, pleads with the powers of the dead to prevent Dionysophon to marry anyone but her, using a binding spell upon him in order to keep him from all her rivals, especially the hated Thetima. Some scholars have speculated that Phila is a *pallakē* (concubine), kept in an informal relationship with Dionysophon and now threatened by the prospect of his marriage to Thetima, and, while other explanations are possible, this scenario highlights a social situation in which restraining spells and their counterparts, retaining spells, might be used.

In the ancient Greco-Roman world, marriage provided for a woman a relatively stable position in society, in which recognition of her claims to that status and support from the family into which she had married were bolstered by the authority of her native family. Without this socially recognized status, her position, even her means of life, might be much more precarious and dependent on the whims of the male with whom she was associated. The category of precariously positioned women included not only prostitutes, who depended on income from their erotic relationships for their livelihood, but also many other women, often referred to as concubines, who formed erotic relationships with men that were not supported by the marriage contract. In such situations, where the legal options were few and the stakes extremely high, we might reasonably expect such women to turn to magical solutions, to use extra-ordinary means to solve their problems, when the normal means available were few and ineffective.

One such magical recourse was the *philtron*, the love potion or spell, whose name suggests not the burning desire of *erōs* but the more durable bond of affection termed *philia*. *Philia* can certainly be used of sexual (and, in that sense, erotic) relationships, but it also can refer to the relationship with family members and friends. Faraone points out the interesting way in which such *philtrā* were imagined to work, increasing the benevolence of the target toward the agent by relaxing him and taming his aggressive impulses. Like the effects of wine, which in moderate quantities seems to enhance erotic feelings but in larger quantities can bring about incapacitation, such *philtrā* at first made the target relaxed and happy, but further application or overdose could bring about sedation of the target or even, in certain cases, death.⁴ A prostitute in Alciphron (Alciphro. *Epist.* 4.10.3) seeks a

potion that will not only keep her client from straying, but also tame his drunken bad temper and make him a more docile lover. In a speech from fourth-century Athens (Antiphon 1), a concubine anxious about being dismissed puts *pharmaka* in the wine; but, instead of making the man more affectionate, the *philtron* killed him.⁵ Later references to cases in which a man was poisoned by an attempt to secure his affections with a love charm show that the woman could either have been acquitted ([Aristotle], *Magna moralia* 16, 1138^b29–38) on the grounds that she did not mean to kill him or condemned on the grounds that she did in fact cause his death (Basil of Caesarea, Letter 188.8). Plutarch (*Coniugalia praecepta* 139a) warns the young bride not to meddle with such *philtrā*, since she is likely to end up with a husband whose sedated virility would leave the relationship crippled.

Faraone 1999 compares the effects of these *philtrā* with a type of spell known as the *thumokatoxon*, the spell for restraining anger, for binding down the *thumos*, the seat of strong emotion. He suggests that the *thumos* can be understood almost as *machismo*, the impulse toward displays of masculine forcefulness, whether sexual or not. Just as modern people might loosely refer to an excess of testosterone as the cause of either violently aggressive or oversexed masculine behavior, so the ancient Greeks might have been concerned about an excess of *thumos* and sought to restrain it, either to prevent violence or to halt indulgence in sexual activity. The *thumokatoxon* spells combine the effect of restraining the anger of a powerful male with an enhancement of the personal charms of the agent. One recipe boasts: “A charm to restrain anger and to secure favor and an excellent charm for gaining victory in the courts—it works even against kings; no charm is greater” (PGM 36.35), while another promises: “The world has nothing greater than this. For when you have it with you you will always get whatever you ask from anybody. Besides it calms the angers of masters and kings” (PGM 12.277–8). Such magic moves out of the realm of the erotic, but it is worth noting that subordinate males are imagined as employing the same kind of magic to retain the favor of their social superiors in a legal or political context as women are employing to retain the favor of their men in an erotic one.

The combination of restraining anger and securing affection also occurs in the magical *kestos himas*, the adornment of Aphrodite that Hera borrows in *Iliad* 14.197–210, supposedly to calm the anger and restore the affection of her quarrelling parents, but actually to seduce her husband, Zeus, and to lull him into forgetting the Trojan battlefield.⁶ A Hellenistic epigram (AP 5.158) describes a girl wearing an intricate floral girdle with the inscription, “Love me forever and don't get angry if another man holds me,” once again combining the

wish to retain love with the restraint of anger. This item blurs the lines between a magic charm and an adornment that merely enhances Hermione's natural charms; ancient moralizers place all such adornments, ranging from ordinary cosmetics and jewelry to magical *philter* and *thumokatoxoi*, in the spectrum of devices by which women manipulate men's affections.

Obtaining Spells

If women anxious about preserving their relationships use retaining spells to tame their men, and if jealous lovers of both sexes use restraining spells to prevent their rivals from being successful, how would the unsuccessful lover try to obtain the beloved? If normal means of seduction or courtship have failed, magical means can provide solutions for the lover. One spell from the late Greco-Egyptian collection of magical recipes known as the Great Paris Magical Papyrus (PGM 4.1265–74) involves staring into the beloved's eyes while murmuring the name of Aphrodite for seven consecutive days. The erotic gaze that so fascinates modern theorists, penetrating through barriers to ravish the soul of its object, does not seem, however, to have similarly captured the imagination of the ancients. *Erōs* may come into the lover through the eyes, but that is not the route through which most erotic magic attempts to capture the beloved. In most cases the magic used to obtain the affections of a beloved focuses rather on inflicting the symptoms of *erōs* on the target, stirring up her desire and leading her to the agent performing the spell. The gendered pronouns are deliberate here, since the vast majority of “obtaining” spells that have been discovered have a male agent and a female target, and the exceptions—spells that have female agents and male targets, or spells with agents and targets of the same gender—seem to borrow the formulae from the male agent/female target pattern.

While gazing into the beloved's eyes may be one way of signaling the lover's desires, another charm that appears both in the literary sources and in the spellbooks is the apple charm—a type of spell in which the lover throws an apple (or a quince, a pomegranate, or some other seed-filled sweet fruit) at the target, transferring his love to the one who picks up this token charged with erotic resonances. Ovid (*Heroides* 20 and 21) recounts the tale of a clever youth, Acontius, who won his bride by tossing an apple inscribed with the words “I vow to marry Acontius” over the garden wall where his beloved would pick it up and read it; the vow was magically effective, to the

extent of incurring divine punishment when the girl's parents tried to prevent the marriage. A spell preserved on a first-century (bce or ce) papyrus makes use of the same idea:

To whichever woman I give or whichever woman I throw the apple at or hit with it, setting everything aside, may she be mad for my love—whether she takes it in her hand and eats it or sets it in her bosom—and may she not stop loving me. O Lady Kyprogeneia, bring to perfection this perfect incantation. (SM 72 col. i.10–14 = PGM 122)

Again, as with the eye contact spell, we can see the blurring of lines between magical action and simple flirtation—the tossing of the apple to the girl, catching her attention; the girl picking it up and putting it to her lips, or perhaps tucking it away into her bosom. Indeed, in Lucian (*Dial. meret.* 12.1.30–6), one courtesan complains of her boyfriend flirting with another woman by tossing her a bit of apple, which she kissed and put between her breasts. Tossing the apple is the active step in the relationship, signaling one's interest, so a prostitute may toss an apple at a potential client, to catch his attention and express her readiness for sex (Aristophanes, *Clouds* 996–7).

The apple serves as a symbol of sexual desire, perhaps of fertility, certainly of erotic interest, which is why, Plutarch tells us (*Sol.* 20.4, *Con. praec.* 138d, *Quaest. Rom.* 279f), a quince or an apple was presented to a new bride on her wedding night, symbolizing the awakening of her sexuality, legitimized and sanctioned by the ritual of marriage. Another item associated with the awakened sexuality of marriage is the *iunx*, the little toy made of a disk that gives off a hum when spun on a double cord. Depictions of elaborately stylized *iunges* appear on many wedding vases, and on one Attic pyxis depicting the preparation of a bride the *numpheutria* (maid of honor) spins a little *iunx* as the bride does her hair (London E 774).

The *iunx*, however, also appears as a magical device designed to attract lovers through its whirling and humming. When the beautiful courtesan Theodote asks Socrates how he manages to attract so many handsome young men, he jokes that he is expert in the use of the *iunx* and that perhaps he will show her his tricks some day so that she can be as successful as he is (Xen. *Mem.* 3.11.16–17). Theocritus' Simaetha uses it, and Pindar (*Pyth.* 4.213–19) recounts that Aphrodite herself first taught Jason the use of the *iunx* to win Medea. The imagery here is startlingly different from that of idyllic wedding vases or of the flirtatious banter of Socrates and Theodote. Aphrodite takes the *iunx*-bird (the wryneck) and nails it, like Ixion, to a rotating wheel, and the effect is to transfer the maddening torture of the bird to Medea,

lashing her with the torments of *erōs* and making her forget the respect she owes to her parents in her overwhelming love for Jason. The *iunx* does not merely cause disorientation with its spinning; the target is lashed like a spinning top spun by a whip, while the hum of the wheel becomes a siren song that lures the target in.

This pattern of inflicting violent torture and madness in order to bring the beloved to the lover appears in one of the most common forms of erotic magic: the type of obtaining spell that is often labeled the ἄγωγῆ, the leading spell. With imagery that is often horrifyingly graphic and violent, these obtaining spells wish for the madness and torments of *erōs* to be inflicted upon the target.

Fetch Euphemia, whom Dorothea bore, for Theon, whom his mother Proechia bore, to love me with love and longing and affection and intercourse, with mad love. Burn her members, her liver, her female parts, until she comes to me, longing for me... do not let her eat, or drink, or find sleep, or have fun, or laugh, but make her run away from every place and from every house and leave father, mother, brother, sisters, until she comes to me. (*SM* 45.29–32, 45–8 = *PGM* 101; compare *SM* 40.12–21 = *PGM* 81)

As horrible as these agonies may seem, the torments inflicted on the victim are, by and large, the same torments that *erōs* was thought to inflict on a lover—sleeplessness, twisting and turning, a burning feeling, inability to eat or drink, inability to concentrate, to think of anyone else or be with anyone else, and, ultimately, madness.⁷

The fact that many of these obtaining spells aim to project upon the target the feelings of *erōs* has led some scholars to imagine a kind of psychological transfer, in which the tormented lover projects his own feelings upon his beloved in the hopes that she will reciprocate his love. As Winkler puts it,

Between the agent and the victim, as depicted in these scenarios, there is a curious transference. The rite assigns a role of calm and masterful control to the performer and imagines the victim's scene as one of passionate inner torment. But if we think about the reality of the situation, the intended victim is in all likelihood sleeping peacefully, blissfully ignorant of what some love-stricken lunatic is doing on his roof; while the man himself, if he is fixated on this particular woman, is really suffering in that unfortunate and desperate state known as *erōs* ... The typical client for such a rite was not a Don Juan who wanted to increase the sheer number of his conquests but rather some young male who needed it rather desperately. (Winkler 1991: 225–6)

While not impossible, this scenario imagines far more insight into the psychology of the agent than our evidence can possibly provide.

Especially since the symptoms of *erōs* described are so traditional and the spells themselves so formulaic, there is no reason to suppose we can uncover anyone's authentic feelings from the texts. However, the same formulaic character prevents us from drawing too many conclusions about the nature of the targets; the graphic list of sex acts prohibited and the injunctions to prevent any other man from sexual contact with the target do not necessarily indicate (*pace* Dickie 2000: 571) that the target must be a prostitute. The generic tendency of curses of all types to enumerate or list items and to aim at completeness by covering contingencies provides sufficient explanation of the phenomenon's occurrence in the erotic spells, even if some spells certainly were in fact directed at sex workers, whether by clients or by rival prostitutes. While we may not know much about the individuals who used this kind of magic, we can nevertheless learn much about ancient ideas of *erōs* and the kinds of social dynamics involved.

Erōs is a passion, something suffered, and a devastating loss of self-control, not the gentle and delightful giddy feeling so often associated in modern thought with “falling in love.” Stories abound of the terrible effects of love, and even of love hurled as a curse—such as the story of the poet Homer cursing a priestess who rejected him, dooming her to fall hopelessly in love with ugly old men ([Herodotus], *Life of Homer* 30). So painful and disturbing are the effects of *erōs* that some spells, the so-called *diabolē* or slander spells, even ask that *erōs* be inflicted on the target as a punishment for some imaginary crime of which the agent accuses the target. Usually invoking a dreadful and dangerous moon goddess, the agent generally claims that the target has defamed the goddess or performed obscene sacrifices to her (e.g., *PGM* 4.2474–92).⁸ *Erōs* is the first stage of punishment in this spell, which can also be used to cause illness—or even death, if the ritual is prolonged.

It is in this context too that we should understand images of the god Eros, armed not with a little baby-Cupid bow and arrow, but with torches and a whip, so as to burn and wound the soul (*psuchē*) of the target on whom *erōs* is being inflicted. The tale of Cupid and Psyche, known best from Apuleius' fable of the trials of the beautiful Psyche seeking to regain her lost husband, appears in a different form in the spell known as the Sword of Dardanos (*PGM* 4.1716–1870). The spell, which “immediately bends and attracts the soul of whomever you wish,” instructs the agent to make a gem engraved on one side with images of Psyche dominated by Aphrodite and tormented by the burning torches of Eros, while the other side depicts Psyche and Eros clasped in an embrace. Precisely such a gem has been found, inscribed with a version of the formula directed in the Greco-Egyptian

formulary; and other gems depicting a butterfly-winged Psyche bound and tormented by Eros show that the theme was not uncommon.⁹ The obtaining spells, then, attempt to dominate the soul of the target and inflict upon it the feeling of burning so characteristic of *erōs*.

Many spells, however, target not just the soul, but specifically the body. A clay figurine, now in the Louvre, of a woman bound hand and foot and pierced with nails was discovered in Egypt with a lead tablet, and both the figurine and the tablet correspond remarkably closely to a spell from the Great Paris Magical Papyrus (*PGM* 4.296–466).¹⁰ This recipe book provides the following instructions:

And take thirteen copper needles and stick 1 in the brain while saying, “I am piercing your brain, NN”; and stick 2 in the ears and 2 in the eyes and 1 in the mouth and 2 in the midriff and 1 in the hands and 2 in the pudenda and 2 in the soles, saying each time, “I am piercing such and such a member of her, NN, so that she may remember no one but me, NN, alone.” (*PGM* 4.321–8)

This recipe, although complex and involving not just the figurine but an inscribed tablet and an elaborate deposition ritual, appears to have been fairly popular, since no less than five examples of the executed spell have been discovered, although only one such figurine has survived. While the figurine may seem like a voodoo doll of the modern popular imagination, the nails are not sadistically intended to cause piercing pains in the corresponding regions of the target. Rather, they are explicitly designed to bind the target magically to the agent and turn her thoughts and memory to him. Like Theon's spell for Euphemia above, the spell here makes the target remember only the agent, forgetting all her other social ties and obligations. The great force, even violence, expressed in the ritual of binding and piercing the figurine represents the impetus that is needed to break the target's internal will and self-control, as well as the external social obligations that prevent her from succumbing to the agent's desires.

The pattern of male domination over female sexuality nevertheless appears strongly in these sources. Although this kind of spell could be adapted for female use upon a male target, the preponderance of the male agent–female target pattern, both in the formularies and in the executed examples, illustrates the cultural protocol, throughout the range of times and places that produced these spells, that assumed male dominance and active role in the erotic relationship.¹¹ Even if, as Winkler rightly cautions, the gap between social protocol and actual behavior may have at times been very wide, the spells show the force and violence that was imagined to be needed to disrupt the personal and social barriers that inhibit the female target's expression of desire.¹²

It is worth noting that these spells do not envisage physical barriers like locked doors that must be surmounted, nor male guardians or parents who must be circumvented (Faraone 1999, 167–8). Any seclusion of the women targeted is therefore likewise a protocol, an imagined inaccessibility. Indeed, since the relative seclusion of women correlates to their desirability, the most desirable maiden would obviously be the most unattainable, the noble, pure, and chaste maiden carefully guarded by her parents rather than the woman who was available to anybody. Inaccessibility thus could be a carefully cultivated posture, whether by upper class women in Athens in the fourth century bce or by a *hetaira* in Ptolemaic Alexandria whose careful selectivity with regard to her clientele reinforced, according to the law of supply and demand, her high prices.

In any case, any target for whom the agent must go to the extraordinary lengths of commissioning or performing a magical ritual is by that very fact inaccessible enough, at least in the agent's estimation, to require such exercise of power and force. The point is made ironically in Lucian's description (*Philopseudes* 13–15) of a young man who hires an exotic (and expensive!) sorcerer to perform an elaborate obtaining spell so as to compel the beautiful wife of his neighbor to come banging on his door in the middle of the night for sex, only to have another character comment drily that he knows the woman in question and that she could be had by anyone for a mere 20 drachmas. Nevertheless, for the youth, the obstacles seemed such that he would be willing to pay one hundred times that price to have a Hyperborean sorcerer draw the moon down from the heavens, invoke Hekate, animate an Eros statue, and even call up his father from the dead to ask for permission.

While the practical obstacles to men's erotic access to women obviously differed not only from individual to individual, but also between social contexts and time periods, it is notable that the problem of access and of dissolving the social obligations appears far more frequently in spells in which a male is targeting a female, while spells with a female agent and a male target or same-sex spells are concerned less with access, with bringing the target out of the house and dissolving the social obligations, than with restraining rivals or retaining the current partner.

Imagining Erotic Magic

While the evidence of spellbooks and material examples seems to show that men were more often using magic to obtain the love of

women, the literary evidence presents a very different picture. There are numerous and elaborate depictions of women using erotic magic, in contrast to a definite paucity of men. Even the few men who are depicted as using erotic magic are generally shown as clients of some powerful female magician. Scholars have explained this gap between the literary imagination and the evidence reflective of real life in a variety of ways; these range from ignoring the epigraphic evidence and assuming that women were indeed the primary users of erotic magic to reading the literary evidence as a systematic projection of men's activities onto women through male anxieties about female sexual power. The predominance of women in the imaginative depictions of erotic magic seems, however, to stem primarily from their place in the Greco-Roman imaginary as Other; it is a way of depicting difference from the male norm.

The essential feature of all the phenomena labeled "magic" in the ancient Greco-Roman world is their abnormality, their difference from the everyday and ordinary, whether what is at stake is the practices or the people who engage in them. For those who engage in practices they consider magic, these rituals promise solutions beyond the ordinary to problems they have not been able to solve by ordinary means. Others blame magic to explain events inexplicable by ordinary explanations. And when people imagine the power to do things not ordinarily within their ability to perform, that too is magic. As Gordon points out, the imagined power of magic is bounded only by the limits of the imagination, so literature tends to depict magic in more extreme ways, as being more out of the ordinary, more inexplicable, more powerful.

The extra-ordinary nature of magic manifests itself in both the users and the things they do. The characters depicted as using erotic magic are not exclusively female, but gender is one of the markers of alterity, along with age, alien origin, and marginal social status, that indicate the extra-ordinary status of the one using magic. Some figures display only a limited alterity, like the male *magoi* from foreign lands, such as Lucian's Hyperborean, while others, like Apuleius' Meroe, pile up the levels of alterity, being not only female but also old, foreign (an inhabitant of Thessaly, notorious for its witches), and a tavern-keeper. Stratton's (2007) study of the figure of the witch in Greek and Roman literature provides a good set of types: young and sexy sorceresses; oversexed, super-powered old hags; and male foreigners.

The male sorcerers bring the alterity of the foreign, wisdom from the beyond (Egypt or Chaldea, or even Hyperborean lands), as well as a social position outside the normal social hierarchies. They are often depicted as itinerant experts; they come into the community to offer

their services to love-struck youths or foolish women, but they do not use their powers for their own sexual satisfaction. In imaginative literature, that is the role of women.¹³

The sexy sorceress has magical powers that are in some way an extension of her sexual attractiveness: nature aided by art. She may be semi-divine, like Homer's Kirke, or a somewhat marginal figure, like Theocritus' Simaetha, who appears to run her own household; but in either case she is not under a male guardian who controls her sexual relationships. Simaetha casts an elaborate obtaining spell, invoking Hekate and using the *iunx* to drag her faithless lover to her house. Other literary figures, like Deianeira or Medea, still don't use obtaining spells, but rather retaining spells (like Deianeira's accidentally poisoned robe) or magic designed to restrain their rivals (like Medea's intentionally poisoned robe). In literature the effects of the spells can be more grandiose, as the level of alterity is increased; in particular Medea, the foreign witch, seems to have nearly limitless powers in some versions of her story.

The older witch types, the oversexed widows and predatory hags, who appear with increasing frequency and increasing power in Roman literature, often share this near-omnipotence. Stratton links this type to fears in late republican and early imperial Rome of the increasing power of elite women, who had more independent control of property and wealth.¹⁴ Apuleius' Pamphile certainly seems to typify such a powerful and wealthy woman; she uses her magic to attract young lovers, even casting an obtaining spell to make a handsome youth come banging on her door in the middle of the night (Apul. *Met.* 3.15–16). However, many of these older women are more marginal than elite, Thessalian hags or drunken old bawds who have built up a repertoire of magical powers, and this marginal status may actually serve to emphasize their extra-ordinary power. Horace's Canidia, like the *saga* whom Tibullus' lover employs or the dreadful Meroe in Apuleius, has supreme power over the whole of nature, she can make streams run backward, pull the moon down from the sky, and disrupt the entire order of the cosmos in any way she pleases (Hor. *Epist.* 5.17, *Sat.* 1.8; Tib. 1.2; Apul. *Met.* 2.5). Again, none of these women's sexuality is under male control; even the matron Pamphile conducts her affairs entirely unbeknownst to her clueless cuckold of a husband. They use their magical powers to satisfy their sexual desires, unfettered by any social constraints or limitations imposed by the cosmic order upon everyday life. Whether this is a fantasy or a nightmare depends on the particular literary depiction—and on the reactions of its audience.

Conclusions

Of course, the extra-ordinary nature of magic in the Greco-Roman imaginary cuts both ways: magic may be powerful beyond all ordinary limitations or it may be a worthless waste of time, incapable of producing any results. Lucian's Hyperborean magician turns out to be a fraud who takes 20 minas from a youth to bring a woman who could be bought for 20 drachmas. Medea's beauty and nearly unbounded magical power do not suffice to keep Jason in a happy erotic relationship with her, an irony that Ovid exploits to its fullest potential (*Ov. Ars am.* 2.99–107; *Rem. am.* 259–64; *Her.* 12.163–72; see Prince 2003). Pliny sneers at those who believe that the various parts of the hyaena have any special effects.

Even Pliny (*HN* 28.4.19), however, admits that everyone fears the power of curses, and even the wise philosopher Sosipatra took steps to guard herself against the love spell cast by Philometor (Eunapios, *Vitae sophistarum* 413). While there is no way to judge, from a modern perspective, whether any of this erotic magic “worked,” from the standpoint of cultural history we can nevertheless conclude that erotic magic was a real part of the Greco-Roman world, both in the imagination of its possibilities and in the practices of those seeking extra-ordinary solutions to the endless problems that can arise in erotic relationships. The evidence, in literature and in epigraphic sources, provides insights into those problems as well as into the ways people thought those problems might be solved. This material is a rich source for the understanding of ancient Greco-Roman sexualities, providing glimpses of the underlying patterns of erotic behavior, both in the fantasies of the ancient Greeks and Romans and in the realities of their relationships.

Guide to Further Reading

The most important study of this material is undoubtedly Faraone 1999. Faraone draws upon the insights of, but also responds to some of the problems with, Winkler 1991 and Faraone's own work on the agonistic context of all types of binding spells. LiDonnici 1998 draws some good comparisons with the medical literature. Dickie 2000 challenges the ideas of Winkler and Faraone about the constructions of gender that appear in the evidence, but, despite an excellent collection of the literary material, he misses many of the nuances of their arguments, and indeed of the literary texts themselves. The best treatment of magic in the Greco-Roman imaginary is Gordon 1999;

the ideas are sketched more briefly in Gordon 1987. Stratton 2007 provides a good overview of different ways in which the users of magic were depicted in the literary sources. Stratton attempts to link the shifts in types between eras to changing historical circumstances, but, while some of her connections are quite illuminating, she fails to acknowledge and account for the presence of all these types in all of the eras she treats. Graf 1997 is a good overview of magic in the ancient Greco-Roman world. I set out my own view of magic as an extra-ordinary religious practice in Edmonds 2008. The evidence for erotic magic may be found in a few different collections. Betz 1997 provides translations of the Greco-Egyptian spellbooks or formularies known as the Greek magical papyri; this collection includes more material than Preisendanz and Henrichs' *Papyri Graecae magicae* (1973–4–4). Ogden's sourcebook (Ogden 2009) provides a good selection of both epigraphic and literary evidence, although his explanatory notes are not always reliable. Gager 1992 ch. 2, provides an excellent collection of the erotic curse tablets, many drawn from the collections in *Supplementum Magicum* (SM), in Audollent's *Defixionum tabellae* (DT), in Wünsch's *Defixionum tabellae atticae* (DTA), and in the *Supplementum epigraphicum Graecum* (SEG).

Notes

- 1 Cf. Ovid's aphrodisiac salad at *Ars am.* 2.415–25. Another recipe is simply “to copulate a lot” (*PGM* 7.183–5).
- 2 See *PGM* 58.24–5 for a contraceptive amulet; *PGM* 22a.11–14 prescribes a Homeric line, namely *Iliad* 3.40.
- 3 Perhaps the most famous testimony is Catullus' request to Lesbia (*Cat.* 7.11–12; 5.10–13) to give him so many kisses that the envious onlookers would not be able to count them and bewitch their love (*fascinare* or *malus invidere*).
- 4 Faraone 1999, 126–9 lists a number of other *pharmaka*, substances used for poison or healing, that have a similar pattern of effect. Theophrastus (*HP* 9.9.1; 9.19.3; 9.19.1; 9.11.6) discusses mandrake, cyclamen, oleander, and another plant, which is probably belladonna: all have a narcotic effect in larger doses but promote good feeling in smaller quantities.
- 5 Cf. the mythic parallel of Deianeira, who, anxious about being supplanted in the home by Herakles' war-prize Iole, uses a *pharmakon* to try to recapture his love. In the tragedy, of course, what she thinks is a love charm (*pharmakon*) is really a deadly

poison (*pharmakon*), but Deianeira's motivation fits the pattern.

6 Scholars disagree as to whether this adornment should be imagined as an amulet, a girdle, or even a cross-your-heart breast band. See Faraone 1999, 97–9 for discussion.

7 Such symptoms have a long history in the literary tradition. See, e.g., Sappho Fr. 2 or Anacreon Fr. 413.

8 Although the idea of inflicting *erōs* as a divine punishment appears in the Greco-Roman mythic tradition from Euripides' *Hippolytus* to Apuleius' tale of Cupid and Psyche, this pattern of transferring the slander to the target of the spell does not appear in earlier Greek magical texts; it has, however, a long history within the Egyptian magical tradition, so it seems to be a perfect example of the way ritual experts were able to innovate by working within both traditions. Betz 1997, p. 83 n. 314.

9 Cf. Inv. 1526 of the Guardabassi collection (see Mouterde 1930). See also the two gems Inv. No. Ж 316 and Ж 20 in the Hermitage collection.

10 On the correspondences between the executed examples and the formulary, see Martinez 1991 (with detailed commentary).

11 Winkler 1991: 216 suggests “that the victimage models enacted in agogai paradoxically incorporate rather than suppress women's desire but that they do so only within the models of family competition and male fantasy in which any desire is a dangerous irruption into one's autonomy and in which women's desire in particular must be thought of—that is, by men—as submitting to the pretensions of masculine control.”

12 Faraone 1999, 78–95 compares abduction marriage as a similar strategy designed to maintain the protocols of paternal control over the daughter's sexuality. The control of the father (or of another *kurios*) is broken only through a violent invasion, which may in fact have been not so violent; it may even have involved the cooperation of the bride.

13 Pace Dickie 2000: 577–82. The only males on his list of experts in erotic magic who use it for their own relationships are Jason in Pindar, who actually receives the *iunx* from Aphrodite, and Lucian's Alexander, who does not actually use erotic magic to attract sexual partners, but simply flatters an old woman for money.

14 Stratton 2007, 96: “the preoccupation with sexually predatory old women and women with money reflects a particularly Roman concern that women who were economically independent and socially emancipated threatened male control over the *domus* and the very structures of society.”

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Chapter 18

Dream Interpretation, Physiognomy, Body Divination

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Dream Interpretation

The first dream interpretation systems predate the Greco-Roman world. In the case of Egypt, we already possess fragmentary treatises on dream interpretation from the New Kingdom. In Greece, the discipline is mentioned from the time of the Homeric poems: among the men besieging Troy were *oneiropoloi* (*Iliad* 1.63) who would explain the will of the gods through dreams. In the archaic period interpreters of dreams accompanied the tyrants (e.g. the Peisistratids: Herodotus 1.56). The first treatises on dream interpretation perhaps date from the end of the archaic era, if it is correct to date Panyassis of Halicarnassus to this period. From the very beginning of Greek culture, the mantic function of dreams was clearly established and rarely contested.

The technician in this discipline most often bears the name of *oneirokritēs* (literally, a “judge of dreams”). This function was socially stratified: interpreters attached to kings, like Aristandros of Telmessos in the service of Philip II of Macedon and Alexander (Arrian, *Anabasis* 2.18.1), formed an elite situated well above the modest practitioners—those who set up shop in the *agora* or at assemblies, explaining dreams for a small sum (Aristophanes, *Wasps* 52–3). The techniques they employed were rudimentary: Plutarch (*Aristides* 27.3), for example, speaks of “a grandson of Aristides, Lysimachos, a very poor man, who made his own living by means of a sort of dream-interpreting tablet, his seat being near the so-called Iaccheium.” More

prosperous clients could employ *oneirokritai* who would take the time to proceed into long analyses of dreams, after informing themselves about the habits of the dreamer and the customary events current in his or her environment (see Artemidorus, 4.4 P, 248).² In parallel, individuals from every social class would practice the discipline in an amateur fashion (see the opening of Aristophanes' *Wasps*, or Xenophon, *Anabasis* 3.1.11–13, 4.3.8).

From the classical period onwards, dreams came to have a place in certain cults, especially medical cults like that of Asklepios at Epidaurus, and, if they were requested by one of the faithful in the presence of the god, they became a means of communicating directly with him (see the stele of cures at Epidaurus, *SIG.* 3.1168). In parallel, philosophers and physicians reflected on dreams, their origin, and divinatory value (e.g. Plato, *Timaeus* 71D). Then appeared the belief in a natural explanation of dreams originating from certain dispositions of the dreamer's body or soul, gods no longer being the unique cause of dreams (Aristotle, *On Dreams*). In general, people widely shared the conviction that dreams, or at least certain dreams, had a meaning. The legitimacy of the discipline of interpreting them was hardly questioned; the skepticism of Aristotle's *On Dreams* was marginal.

The Hellenistic period saw the multiplication of treatises on dream interpretation, some of them taking shape as collections of dreams, especially those of notable men (Näf 2004, 63–79). It is to this period that we must undoubtedly assign many of the authors mentioned by Artemidorus, for instance Alexander of Myndos or Phoibos of Antioche (2.9 P, 111). Greek dream interpretation also incorporated some non-Greek traditions, as attested by the painted image of a Cretan interpreter in Memphis, Egypt (end of the third century bce; Cairo, Egyptian Museum 27.567). In the Greco-Roman world, dreams were also used by worshippers of Egyptian gods like Sarapis.

In Rome, dream interpretation first appeared as a Greek import (Näf 2004, 80–91). As a divinatory technique, it only developed toward the end of the Roman Republic. Cicero's treatise *On Divination*, written in 44 bce, refutes the foundations of the discipline, but also bears witness to the importance that dream interpretation had already assumed (1.116, *interpretatio somniorum*). During the imperial era, it appears to have spread to all the spheres of society. The history of imperial power is dotted with dreams, all the way up to Constantine; there were dream interpreters (*interpretes somniorum*) around the person of the *princeps*, even at the court of the Severans (Weber 2000).

In the Greek part of the empire, the interest in dream interpretation always remained lively. Plutarch gives dreams an important place in his *Lives*, and in his *Banquet of the Seven Sages* (159a) he proclaims that they are the oldest form of oracle.

Historiography and the novel also make ample use of them. In the Roman East, the first three centuries of the Imperial period saw the oracular sanctuaries of Sarapis or Asklepios flourishing and making a large use of dreams as privileged instruments for communicating with the gods (Aelius Aristides, *Sacred Discourses*); at the same time, in the Hippocratic tradition, Galen composed his treatise *On Diagnosis from Dreams*, which, as the title indicates, examines the role that dreams can play in establishing a diagnosis (a point on which he reveals reservations).

This form of prophecy, although widely accepted, nevertheless awakened some resistance, emphasizing that dream interpretation could sometimes smack of charlatanry (Lucian, *Alexander or the False Prophet* 49). Cicero (*On Divination* 2.125) confirms: "How many treat them [sc. dreams] with disdain, and regard a belief in them as the superstition of a weak and effeminate mind!"

Out of all this oneirocritic productivity, we have extant only the treatise of Artemidorus of Daldis. His *Oneirocritica* is very elaborate,³ undoubtedly much above the common run of dream interpretations in his time. The author published this book under the name of Artemidorus of Daldis; Daldis was his mother's city, but he himself was born at Ephesus, where he seems to have practiced his art (3.66 P, 235; see Price 1986, Walde 1999). The work is dated to the second half of the second century ce, but a precise study of the text shows that its composition was not completed until the Severan age (Robert 1969, 311–12). The universe of Artemidorus and his clients was strongly impregnated by elements reflecting the conditions of the Roman East. We must therefore not see in this book a simple inheritance of several centuries of Greek oneirocritic tradition, in which Artemidorus did nothing but copy his predecessors. On the contrary, he is careful to adapt himself to new conditions (see his remark on the baths, 1.64 P, 68). Artemidorus was interested not only in the dreams of members of civic and imperial elites (as argued by Bowersock 1994, 93–4), but in those of all kinds of people, including slaves or shopkeepers (Weber 1999). Athletes made a significant portion of Artemidorus' dreamers, a fact that reflects the major part played by agonistic life in the civilization of that time.

The work is divided into five books; he began by publishing the first two. After a theoretical exposition concerning the various types of dreams (1.1–9), he examines an entire series of oneiric themes and explains their significance, often distinguishing them according to the sex, age, social status, and trade of the dreamer. Book 3 was redacted soon after, in response to critics; it was meant to cover points that had been overlooked. Book 4 consists of a new theoretical exposition and methodological advice that Artemidorus gives his son, who was

himself going to become a dream interpreter. Book 5 is a collection of dreams followed by stories of their fulfillment.

Artemidorus developed a complex working method and system of exegesis. He gathered for himself a library of dream interpretation books, which he read in a critical manner. He collected numerous dreams and stories of their fulfillment, and in telling them regularly he introduces them with the formula: "I know of a man who ..." (as, for example, at 1.79 P, 95, for someone who dreams of his mother fellating him); but we should not necessarily believe that these dreams came to him through no intermediary. His method is based on the observation of facts and the explanation of the logical links between dreams and their fulfillment. One can therefore speak of a true rationality of procedure, showing that dream interpretation is a veritable *technē*.

Artemidorus distinguishes between two types of dreams: the *enupnion* and *oneiros* (1.1 P, 3; see Price 1986, 10–13). According to Cox Miller (1994, 77–91), "*oneiros* differs from *enupnion* in that the first indicates a future state of affairs, while the second indicates the present state of affairs." A little further on, the *enupnion* contains "not a prediction [*prorrhēsis*] of a future state but rather a reminder [*hupomnēsis*] of a present state." The *enupnion* is the dream manifestation of the dreamer's present preoccupations. Only the *oneiros* is significant. It does not maintain any link with the dreamer's present, but with the more or less near future. In 4.59 P, 283, Artemidorus says that he counseled two men who had recently dreamed, one that he was practicing cunnilingus, the other that a woman was fellating him. Subsequently nothing that these dreams announced happened, because in fact the dreamers voluntarily practiced these types of acts: "For they were simply seeing the objects that ordinarily aroused their passions." Artemidorus is interested only in the *oneiros* and its accomplishment (*apobasis*—outcome). The distinction between *enupnion* and *oneiros* is not attested elsewhere, and these two Greek words seem to have been interchangeable before Artemidorus.

The second important distinction opposes theuromatic dreams and allegorical dreams (1.2 P, 4–5; 4.1 P, 241–2). In the first, what is seen in the dream is literally fulfilled, while the dream signifies something else in the second class. The theuromatic dream is a sign of purity of soul; it is when the soul is troubled that the dream becomes allegorical. Virtuous or simple people have more theuromatic dreams than those who are educated and prosperous (4 Preface P, 239). The problem is to separate these two types of dreams (4.1 P, 241–2): the criteria are the quasi-immediacy of the dream's fulfillment and the likelihood of a literal realization.

Artemidorus raises the question of the origin of dreams, much debated especially by philosophers and physicians. While Stoics like Chrysippus believed in the divine origin of dreams, Cicero (*On Divination* 2.124–7) refuted it, thinking that the cause of dreams was rather to be found in the disposition of the body. Artemidorus' position combines several factors. For him, *oneiros* “is a movement or condition of the mind that takes many shapes and signifies good or bad things that will occur in the future” (1.2 P, 5). The body also intervenes, but as a disturbance; Artemidorus endorses on his own account the widespread idea that the dreams coming after an overly generous meal are deceptive. All of that does not exclude the gods: at several points, Artemidorus insists on the distinction between dreams asked of the gods and dreams sent by the gods (1.6; 4.2). The two explanations (physical and divine) are not contradictory for the ancients: gods manifest themselves through phenomena that also have a natural logic. In his *Life of Pericles* (6.4), Plutarch says no different when he distinguishes the physical cause (*aitia*) of an oracular manifestation (which the philosopher explains) and its end (*telos*), divine expression (which the diviner understands).

In dreams and dream interpretation, sexuality plays an important role. The Greeks and the Romans designated the erotic dream with the word *oneirōgmos*. It interested them because of the physiological link between dream and body, revealed by erection and ejaculation (Pigeaud 1988). Even if Artemidorus only makes a brief reference to it (at 1.1 P3), sexuality holds no less eminent a place in his treatise, which is an essential source for historians of ancient sexuality. It is therefore not surprising that Foucault devoted a chapter of his *History of Sexuality* to Artemidorus (see also Price 1986, 20–2). The words that Artemidorus most often uses for sexual relations are *aphrodisia* and *sunousiai*. Sexuality is evoked in a casual manner in plenty of passages of the *Oneirocritica*, as in the collection of dreams in Book 5 (15 and 31, for example). But two passages develop this subject more liberally. In the first, the topic appears when there is discussion of the masculine sex organ (1.45 *aidoion*) as a theme of dreams. The other passage consists in a long development about *aphrodisia* (1.78–80), which closes Book 1. These three chapters distinguish three categories of sexual relations: those in conformity with nature, law, and custom (*phusis*, *nomos*, *ethos*); relations contrary to law; and finally those contrary to nature. In conformity with nature, law, and custom are relations with a spouse, a prostitute, a male or female slave, or masturbation. Only incestuous relations are contrary to law (there is a long passage on incest with one's mother at 1.79). Relations contrary to nature are those that can be dreamed of, but not actualized (such as penetrating oneself or making love with the gods), or those that,

although in the realm of possibility, are considered to upset the natural order (such as female homosexuality, necrophilia, bestiality).

If one now distinguishes between themes within dreams and their fulfillment, one must admit that sexuality is almost entirely absent from the fulfillments of dreams. To be sure, a dream of masturbation announces sexual relations with one's own slaves (1.78 P, 89), but most of the time, sexuality appears in dream fulfillments only within the realm of loves that turn out bad. For example, one will conceive a passionate love for a prostitute (2.16, 5.67) that leads to dependence upon her; one will be confronted with the problem of adultery—whether because of an unfaithful spouse or by being caught in the act by the husband—which brings shame and legal problems (4.41; 1.78 P, 88). In 5.63, a dream with nothing sexual (a woman believes that stalks of grain shoot up from her chest) announces that, without knowing it, she is going to have relations with her own son, which will lead her to suicide. Sexuality was probably not a subject of major anxiety among the clients of dream interpreters, unlike death, sickness, or unemployment. The contrast is also marked with respect to the number of dreams that announce marriage or childbirth (e.g. 2.10 P, 116):

If a man dreams that he sees fire that kindles quickly and burns in the hearth or the baking oven, it is propitious and signifies the birth of children. For both a hearth and a baking oven are similar to a woman in that they receive things that are productive of life.

The sexual universe of the *Oneirocritica* is essentially masculine. A man's obsession with his own penis demonstrates this well. This oneiric theme refers to his life, social status, male line of descent, mastery of public speaking—in short, to everything that establishes and stabilizes the man and his family. In turn, Artemidorus never thought of developing a paragraph to explain the meaning of the female sex organ as an oneiric theme, whether for a male or for a female dreamer. Its meaning is only given in passing (at 1.78 P, 88, touching a woman's sex organ means knowing her secrets, since that is the most secret part of a woman's body). Her breasts are not linked to the sexual domain, but to maternity and child rearing (1.41). It also appears that the overwhelming majority of the sexual dreams reported by Artemidorus are masculine, but it is also true that the totality of Artemidorus' treatise reflects an almost entirely masculine universe. Women's sexual dreams are rare, as are oneiric themes that Artemidorus explains as having a special sense when dreamed by a woman (see the examples in 1.78 P, 88, where a woman dreams that she has been penetrated by someone she knows). One also notes the passage where a woman dreams of her husband's penis (5.86), which

announces to her the birth of a son: “For her husband’s penis was a symbol of the child, since it [sc. the child] had been born as a result of his penis.” There are also some meanings exclusive to prostitutes, like that of dreaming of a naked Aphrodite, which is favorable when one lives from prostitution (2.37 P, 172); but for other women this dream is negative. One sometimes finds examples, specific to women, of sexual realization of a dream: at 2.48, a woman dreams that she beats her husband, which announces that she will become an adulteress.

In this system of explication a very strong bond exists between sexual relations and the idea of expenditure and profit, as Foucault (1986, 18–22, 27–33) has noticed. The waste of human semen is often compared to the loss of money and fortune; potentially unprocreative sexual relations, such as fellation or sodomy, signify ill will and financial losses. The social relations between partners are also essential, especially in the case of homosexual relations. The dream is positive in the case of a relation with someone who is hierarchically superior, like when a slave dreams of sex with his master, or a free man with someone richer than himself (1.78 P, 89).

The *Oneirocritica* permit us also to construct a quick list of socially rejected forms of sexual relations. The reaction to fellation is rather negative; Artemidorus considers it bad between a husband and wife (1.79 P, 95: “for it is impossible for such a woman to share either a meal or a kiss unless, of course, she is pregnant”). It is a form of human *hubris* and cannot be practiced with impunity, except with prostitutes or slaves. Even more to be rejected are lesbian relations, which are classified in the category of acts against nature and devoid of meaning. Finally, there is also concrete information about sexuality (like shame over noise during sexual activity being heard by neighbors) or representations tied to different positions (*schēmata*) during sexual congress (the one with the man on top being valorized, because it translates into greater activity on his part).

Physiognomy

The art (*technē*) that the ancients called *phusiognōmonia* “promises that it examines and perceives the quality of the mind from the quality of the body” (Anonymus Latinus 2; Swain 2007, 556–7). This essentially moral reading of bodies takes into account all available visible signs, such as “movements, gestures of the body, color, characteristic facial expression, the growth of the hair, the smoothness of the skin, the voice, the condition of the flesh, the parts of the body, and the build of the body as a whole” ([Aristotle], *Physiognomonica* 2; Swain 2007,

640–1; see Barton 1994; Sassi 2001; Swain 2007; Dasen and Wilgaux 2008b).

From a philosophical point of view, physiognomy presupposes some sort of unity between the mental and the physical, at least the possibility of reciprocal causation between soul and body. It is therefore highly compatible with hylomorphism, Aristotle's dearly held view that matter and form cannot exist apart from each other. So it is no surprise that we find the richest source of physiognomic observations in the Aristotelian corpus. Indeed the oldest known treatise on physiognomy, probably written in the third century bce (Vogt 1999), was passed down to us as part of Aristotle's texts. But Aristotle's work itself is also full of passages explicitly inspired by physiognomy (see in particular *Prior Analytics* 2.27, 70^b, where the distinction between the *sēmeion* and the *tekmērion* raises questions about the validity of physiognomic reasoning). Further treatises on physiognomy that have come down to us in one form or another date from the first few centuries of the common era (Polemon, Anonymus Latinus, Admandius, and others; see Foerster 1893; Swain 2007). In addition, the very large number of anecdotes and the more or less precise allusions found in the most diverse works testify to the great popularity of this art in the Greco-Roman world, an art founded on the belief that an individual's appearance can reveal not only his character and his moral qualities, but also his future (see, e.g., Swain 2007, 457–9); this last belief manifests itself in the ancient world through the Mesopotamian practice of examining bodies for divinatory purposes, the oldest evidence for which dates back to the second millennium bce.

The recent advent of a history of the body, eager to account for the symbolic dimension of social relations, has of course brought these long-neglected texts to the attention of historians. For, although these physiognomy treatises include no explicit recommendations and hence are not strictly speaking treatises on good manners, nonetheless because, again and again, they describe behavior that is praised or condemned and appearances that are respectable or shameful, they create for us a window into what has come to be known as the discipline of the body: the cultural norms that determine what is a desirable body for each person in function of his or her sex and age. By systematizing a certain moral reading in the framework of a specific *sēmeiōsis*, these texts show us, in the final analysis, how the way each person presented him- or herself in social relations was thought to reveal his or her identity, affiliations, and social hierarchies.

Physiognomy's disapproval of certain physical appearances is made all the stronger by the fact that it is supposed to reveal an individual's

deep nature (*phusis*). What the practitioner of physiognomy brings to light is innate, and as such it plays a determining role in the development of personality, though people are free to rid themselves of such traits to the extent that they can master their own body. Still, no one escapes the expert's discerning gaze.

Concretely, treatises of physiognomy classify their materials in one of two ways. Either they begin with a list of bodily signs to be considered, followed by a discussion of their possible interpretations; or they begin with a list of moral types, followed by a catalog of each one's relevant signs. The whole human race then gets sorted into a number of character types, some good, some bad. For example, the treatise attributed to Aristotle lists about twenty types: the courageous man (*andreios*), the coward (*deilos*), the insensible (*anaisthētos*), the dissembler (*eirōn*), the man with a good memory (*mnēmon*), and so on. The physiognomist's work, when he is done with his examination, is to sort his subject into the right category, thereby picking out the dominant characteristic.

Those who defend physiognomy do so on the basis of its immediate and practical use in everyday life. Here is one example of this sort of defense, offered by Adamantios in the fourth century ce, but taken and summarized from one of the best known treatises of ancient physiognomy, written by Marcus Antonius Polemo of Laodicea in the first half of the second century ce:

Physiognomy in particular is a discovery of divine men which is able to confer the most and the greatest benefits on those who study it; for no one would give a deposit or entrust an heirloom, his wife, or his children, or even share any kind of friendship whatsoever with those who bear obvious signs of dishonesty, licentiousness, or any wrongdoing in their appearance. (Adamantios A2; see Swain 2007, 494–5)

It is clear from this citation that physiognomy is really written by men and for men. In fact women are rarely mentioned in the treatises, and the descriptions of some of the character types do not leave much room for them. Pseudo-Aristotle's high-spirited man (*thumoeidēs*), for example, is known among other signs by his beautiful beard ([Arist.] *Phgn.* 808^a23; see Swain 2007, 646–7).

Nonetheless, the distinction between masculine and feminine is quite essential to physiognomy, since it constitutes one of its methodological tools: identifying a physical trait as typically masculine or feminine, like identifying a trait as animal-like or typical of certain barbarian populations (with their own designated characters), is what makes the moral interpretation of that trait possible. Treatises in physiognomy set up an opposition between a

masculine and a feminine type, assigning to each both a character and a set of physical traits. Feminine bodies are contrasted with masculine ones as generally smaller, softer, lacking in strength and vigor, and fleshier. Characters associated with the masculine type of body are good, while those associated with the feminine are bad: a person classified as masculine is stronger, more daring, and nobler, whereas a person classified as feminine is more unjust, deceitful, cowardly, and so on. The result of cataloguing the physical and moral traits of the masculine and feminine types is, then, a fairly constant devaluing of the feminine and the sharpening of the contrast between the two. Here is Adamantios again (B2; see Swain 2007, 517–9):

The greatest and most obvious signs when it comes to distinguishing the overall appearance are those which are similar to what is masculine or feminine or even to one of the other animals. Masculine parts are better than female. Since for the most part what is masculine is noble, without deceit, just, spirited, competitive and simple. What is female, on the other hand, is ignoble, bitter, deceitful, light-minded, unjust, contentious, and impudently cowardly. In general what is feminine has a smaller head than what is masculine, a slighter body, softer and blacker hair, a narrower face, gleaming and sparkling eyes, a thinner throat, a weaker torso, is narrow-chested, fleshier on the hips and thighs, has thinner calves, is knock-kneed, has daintier fingers and toes, the whole appearance of the body is softer, weaker, daintier, with moist flesh, has less obvious joints and tendons, has a thinner voice, a smaller and more frequent step, more curved limbs and a suppler movement. What is masculine has the opposite traits.

This opposition gets further clarified, however, by the claim that both masculine and feminine traits can occur in any individual.

The primary division and distinction in this type of observation is the existence of a masculine type on the one hand and a feminine type on the other. This is not to be understood according to the system by which the sexes and types are naturally separated but in the general sense that the masculine type may be detected even in the feminine and the feminine in the masculine. (Anonymus Latinus 3; see Swain 2007, 556–7)

The underlying idea, therefore, is that, though the masculine is opposed to the feminine, the distinction is found within each person, so that there is a continuum between the sexes, with the masculine man at one extreme, the feminine woman at the other, and, in the middle, men with any number of feminine traits and women with some masculine traits. A person's overall classification, then, depends on whether the masculine or the feminine is dominant in him or her

(see, e.g., Polemon in Swain 2007, 392–3). A more masculine person, regardless of his or her sex, will give birth to male descendants, while someone more feminine will have female descendants (Anonymus Latinus 7; Swain 2007, 560–1).

Even if the practitioner of physiognomy occasionally values a feminine trait (Anonymus Latinus 10; Swain 2007, 562–3), the masculine type remains the model to be emulated. But it would be simplistic to conclude that a woman with many masculine physical, hence moral, traits must be the ideal woman. Quite to the contrary, the Istanbul manuscript of Polemon's treatise (Swain 2007, 482–3) treats the presence of masculine traits in women and that of feminine traits in men with equal disapproval; both states are seen as an alteration, a corruption of the type. There is a parallel view expressed in the works of the Hippocratics and Aristotle: all women described as physically resembling men are sterile or have difficulty conceiving (e.g. Hipp. *Mul.* 1.6). The masculine and feminine types, then, are not simply combinations of the most general traits common to both sexes; they do correspond to what is naturally appropriate for each sex.

Like dream interpretations or medical discourse (Bonnard 2007), physiognomic judgments depend on a long train of associations and parallels that embody many clichés of Greek and Roman culture. Thus physiognomy's interpretative framework repeats the traditional binary system that opposes masculine and feminine as well as left and right (Anonymus Latinus 7; Swain 2007, 560–1). More importantly, it also repeats the common ancient criticism of intemperance and all that diverges from the just mean—that is, from a norm instantiated by the brave man (Greek *andreios*, Latin *fortis*) or by the orderly man (*kosmios*). And so, in the course of many descriptions and interpretations, we find censured the adulterous (plural; Greek *moichoi*, Latin *adulteri*, *moechi*), the lustful (plural; Greek *lagnoi*, Latin *libidinosi*, *turpiter cum mulieribus conuenientes*), those devoted to sex and pleasure (plural; Latin *veneri dediti*, *iuxta uenerem proniores*) or to sex with young boys (Greek *paiderastai*, Latin *iuxta pueros proni*)—in short, all those who cannot control their sexual desires.

Similarly, though the treatises bring us very little information about women, the attitudes and behavior they do occasionally describe as characteristically feminine are only so many examples of a lack of self-control suggestive of sexual intemperance (in the attitude of the body and in the gaze, for instance), or of a kind of awkwardness (in the walk, for example). This kind of observation also crops up in other sources, which mention feminine gestures only to criticize them for being excessive, disorderly, and tempestuous. The lamentations of women come to mind here, as well as bad actors, who are mocked for their ridiculous gesticulations that imitate low women (see Aristotle,

It is clear, then, that treatises on physiognomy describe feminine behaviors not for their own sake, but only insofar as they deviate dangerously from the expected male norm. In fact it is because they adopt such an androcentric point of view that the treatises perceive the feminine primarily as a threat to the masculine. Feminine traits that are found in men are defects that can only be signs of sexual deviance, whence the constant condemnation of anyone perceived as soft (Greek *malakos*, Latin *mollis*), effeminate, androgynous, or as a eunuch. In this context Polemon draws a famous and devastating portrait of Favorinus of Arles (here in Anonymus Latinus 40; Swain 2007, 582–3):

The eyes of a certain Celt were reported to have been like this by our authority Polemon, who described this man as a eunuch of his own time. He did not write down his name, but it is understood that he was talking about Favorinus. He assigned the other signs of a body of this type to this man: a tense brow, soft cheeks, a loose mouth, a thin neck, thick legs, thick feet as if congested with flesh, a feminine voice, womanly words, limbs, and all his joints without strength, loose and badly connected. He says that this man suffered everything which is disgraceful by his inability to bear his desires, and that he had practised what he had put up with; moreover, that he was abusive, rash, but also devoted to wrongdoing; for he was even said secretly to hawk deadly poison.

“Born without testicles,” according to Polemon (A20; Swain 2007, 376–7), and called a “hermaphrodite” by Philostratus (*Lives of the Sophists* 1.8.489), Favorinus became one of the most brilliant rhetors of his time; but, to his adversary Polemon, his physical malformations had to be signs of moral deviance (Sudan 2008).

The most familiar “deviant” figure in the physiognomic sources, both treatises and anecdotes, is, however, the *kinaidos* (Lat. *cinaedus*; see Richlin 1993), so described by Pseudo-Aristotle (Swain 2007, 646–7; see also Anonymus Latinus 115 with Swain 2007, 626–7):

Signs of a deviant: drooping-eyed and knock-kneed; his head hangs on his right shoulder; his hands are carried palms up and are flabby; and as he walks he either wags his loins or else holds them rigid by an effort; and he casts a furtive gaze around, for all the world like Dionysios the Sophist.

This kind of description does not explain the sexual behavior reviled in the *kinaidos*, concentrating instead on highlighting his deviations from what is expected of a masculine man—who walks like a lion, with measured gestures and gaze. Because it is so general, the description of the *kinaidos* shows especially clearly that physiognomic

interpretations of bodies and attitudes do not, in fact, describe categories of acts so much as categories of persons. As John J. Winkler (1990, 177) put it: “The conception of a *kinaidos* was of a man socially deviant in his entire being, whose deviance was principally observable in behavior that flagrantly violated or contravened the dominant social definition of masculinity” (see also Halperin 2004; Gleason 1990, 1994). That is how, by its rankings and its moral condemnations, physiognomy enforces and legitimates social conventions, tearing apart anything that might tarnish masculine excellence. Should someone entirely lack self-control, pursue pleasure without check, or play the passive role in sexual encounters, such behavior will always be denounced as “effeminate” and considered as necessarily leading to every “depravity” (Gleason 1994).

Body Divination

Another category of sources related to the reading of body parts offers reflections on gender and sexual relations. Two little known treatises on body divination circulated under the name of Melampous, *hierogrammatos*; they offer individual predictions and moral interpretations based on the detailed observation of body parts, especially the head. The body is detailed *a capite ad calcem*, from top to toes, carefully distinguishing between left and right parts. The art is very close to physiognomy but, whereas physiognomists observe a group of signs that must be hierarchized and analyzed according to the harmony they compose, body divination relies on the interpretation of a single isolated sign. Divination also differs in that the body is regarded as a microcosm, each part being governed by a god, as in astrological melothesia.

These treatises, transmitted by medieval manuscripts as well as by papyri from Roman and Coptic Egypt, are each devoted to the reading of specific signs providing omens. The first one, *Peri palmōn mantikē*, deals with predictions that are based on the observation of spontaneous pulsations, tremblings, or convulsions, *palmoi*, which occur in all parts of the body. The longest version is composed of 187 assertions. The second treatise, *Peri elaiōn tou sōματος*, is composed of 26 cases only and deals with the interpretation of skin irregularities designated by the generic term *elaia*, describing olive-shaped anomalies, moles, warts, or birthmarks (translated here “moles” for convenience). Both texts probably belonged to a larger treatise, also transmitted under the name of Melampous, *Peri teratōn kai sēmeiōn*, *On Prodigies and Signs*, mentioned by Artemidorus in his *Key of Dreams*

(3.28). In both treatises the formal structure is the same: first comes the formula *ean alletai/allontai* or *allomenos* (“If this part vibrates,” or “If the mole is located on ...”), which forms the protasis; then follows the interpretation of the sign in the apodosis.

The dating of the texts is difficult. They were conventionally placed in the Hellenistic period because of the dedication to a “Ptolemaic king” (*Ptolemaios basileus*), most likely an invention, as was common in this kind of literature. The vocabulary points toward late antiquity (fifth to seventh century ce), but a number of papyri preserve variants going back to the third century ce (Costanza 2003, 2009; Hurst 2001; Papathomas 2004). Melampous, the author's name, is fictional: it aims to give the text the authority of the famous mythical seer and healer of Thessaly. Variants attribute it to the Sibyl (Suda, Sigma 355) or Hermes Trismegistos (Diels 1908, version H).

The discipline is ancient. In Mesopotamia, manuals dating to the second millennium bce provide individual prophetic interpretations based on similar body signs, from top to toes (Bottéro 1974; Böck 2000). It is unclear whether Arabic palmoscopy and elaioscopy, distinguishing warts and moles, derived from Near Eastern or from Greek traditions, or from both. The diffusion of palmoscopy is wide. Hermann Diels (1908, 1909) collected treatises from many cultures: Arabic, Hebrew, Indian and European. Elaioscopy too became very popular in the Renaissance. Girolamo Cardano wrote in 1550 a treatise on metoposcopy that was translated into French and published in 1658; it had a first part on the language of wrinkles (800 figures) and a second on moles (120 figures), without sex distinctions this time, and Melampous' treatise was given in appendix (Rizzardini 2005).

For long, the content of Melampous' treatises was regarded as a mere degeneracy of physiognomy (Bouché-Leclercq 1879, 175), but an approach combining anthropological and gender perspectives reveals a wealth of data on ancient society. First, the addressees are distributed into a number of categories that reflect social structure; second, as in astrological treatises, the interpretation of the signs varies according to sex. In both treatises the interpretation is also determined by another criterion: the location of the sign on the left or on the right side of the body. The value of a sign on the left side is usually negative, but not systematically so.

The longest treatise, *Peri palmōn mantikē*, deals with palmoscopy—the observation of spontaneous corporeal vibrations. Most signs concern the head (56 out of 187). The interpretation follows the principle that any loss of control of the body is due to divine intervention. In literary sources sneezing is very often mentioned as a prophetic sign, positive or negative according to laterality (e.g.

Homer, *Odyssey*, 17.537–47), but Melampous does not include it, probably because it is an emission of breath, not a vibration (Dasen and Wilgaux 2013). The sexual and the social identity of the addressee are detailed. The divinatory value of the tremor varies according to sex, social status, activity, and physical condition. In all versions, the general statements concern the generic type, which implicitly is that of a man, adult and free. As in Artemidorus, the most frequent oppositions are between man (*anēr*) and woman (*gunē*), the free man and the slave (*doulos*). Only women are defined by their marital status: the prediction differs for an unmarried girl (*parthenos*), a wife (*gunē*), or a widow (*chēra*). The unmarried girl and the widow are subcategories, which implies that a married woman is the expected norm.

More categories appear in variants. In version A (Diels 1908) and in the Vienna papyrus (Costanza 2003; Hurst 2001; Papathomas 2004), three subgroups follow the generic addressee: the slave, the unmarried girl, and the widow, always enumerated in the same order. In version A (Parisinus 2118), the man may be single (*agamos*) or childless (*ateknos*). Some individuals are defined by their job or activity; such are the soldier (§ 1, 8, 23, 56, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 68, 69, 71), the farmer (§ 5, 23), the craftsman (§ 65), the hunter (§ 23), the merchant (§ 3, 56, 62, 63, 69), the thief (§ 68), the traveller (§ 64), the sailor (§ 8) and the pilot (§ 60, 62, 63, 65, 69). Social status structures categories, opposing the free, the freedman, and the slave (§ 59, 64, 67), or the poor (§ 2, 60), and the rich (§ 1, 2, 5, 7, 23). Physical condition also creates distinctions; version A opposes the healthy, the sick, and the childless man (§ 2, 8). Absences reflect gendered preoccupations: whereas female widows form an important category, male widows are not worth mentioning; but a childless man is problematic. Unlike in the *Key of Dreams*, here age classes do not form subcategories. No case concerns a child or an elderly person. The observations are centered on predictions; no character trait is deduced.

The signs may have a similar meaning for all. Thus version A states that a tremor “for some days in the whole body” indicates that the slave must “watch out for conspiracies,” the unmarried girl for “dangers,” and the widow for “a disease” (Diels 1908, § 187). They can also be opposed: “If the left ear shivers, an important event will occur; the slave will undertake important business, the unmarried girl will be reprimanded, the widow will suffer from a loss” (§ 46). If the typology of the signs is constant in all versions, their interpretation varies and can be contradictory from one version to the other, and even within the same text, introduced by the formula *allōs* or *en allois* “another text,” showing that it is a compilation of different sources.

In some cases anatomy explains the prophecy. A vibration in the mouth (§ 55) announces the coming of a much beloved one, suggesting the embrace to come. In one case, the prediction is based on a mythical reference: in version A, a vibration on top of the head announces a husband to the unmarried girl, “because Athena was born from the head of Zeus” (§ 1). Athena is also a *parthenos*, and the image of her birth alludes to the finality of any marriage: procreation.

Elements of melothesia appear in Melampous. As in chiromancy, each finger of the hand is governed by a planet and a god. The thumb is thus associated with Aphrodite (Diels 1908, § 94). A vibration in the right thumb (§ 83) predicts good luck—for the slave a delight, for the unmarried girl a marriage (as does a vibration in the big toe)—but spoliation for the widow.

Daily concerns are wealth, health, reputation, possible harm or drawbacks, departures. As in other divinatory treatises, slaves are centered on their master (anger, death), on changing place or being freed, and they fear accusations and bad treatments (Kudlien 1991). Marriage is not a male concern but the main preoccupation of unmarried girls (seven occurrences in P. Flor. III 391; 18 cases out of 187 in version A) along with reputation (16 cases of blame), and, more rarely, of female widows (§ 1, 6). Fertility and begetting children is a general concern (§ 72, 102, 113, 128), also to slaves (§ 96), though not frequently.

The desire for sexual relations concerns only men and coincides not surprisingly with male sexual organs: a vibration in the right testicle announces a surge of vital energy and the begetting of children (§ 128); in the left testicle, “the favors of a woman” (§ 129); in the glans, sexual relations for the slave (§ 126).

The second treatise, *Peri elaiōn tou sōmatos*, on skin irregularities, is much shorter and transmitted only by manuscripts. The distribution of *elaia* or moles on the body has a psychological as well as a divinatory meaning. A number of differences from the treatise on tremors may be noted: man and woman constitute the main categories, social status and activities are never specified. The interpretations for men and women are usually similar and introduced by “likewise.” Some cases do not make the distinction at all. Unlike in the treatise on tremor, here the character can be deduced from the position of the mole.

The interpretation may correspond to anatomy. Thus the belly is associated with gluttony in both men and women (§ 17), and the forehead is associated with power: in a man, it indicates that he will rule over many people or have great wealth; in a woman, that she will rule or be very important (§ 1).

The traditional virtues attributed to each sex are confirmed: “If a

man has a mole over the eyebrow, he will marry a virtuous and handsome woman, if a woman has a reddish mole at the same place, she will marry a rich and handsome man.” Symmetry can be total: “If the mole is on the eyebrow, the man must avoid to marry because he will have five wives. Likewise for the woman” (§ 2).

The sexual behavior of men and women is alluded to. As in dream books, the nose has sexual connotations: “If a man has a tawny mole on the nose, he will have insatiable sexual appetites.” The mole implies that he does not content himself with his wife, as the second part of the prediction suggests: “If a woman has the mole on the nose or near the eye, she too will be unfaithful.” Sexual voracity is betrayed by a mole in a “hidden place,” *krupton* (§ 20); but a mole on the sex, *phusikon*, announces the birth of boys to a man, of girls to a woman (§ 21). The logic of some interpretations is not always easy to follow: “If the mole is on the hand, the man will have many children. Likewise for the woman” (§ 14).

What influence did this pseudo-science exert in classical antiquity? Did it appeal to the elite or to the plebs? To men or to women, as clients or as practitioners? The number of the extant papyri, about nine (Hurst 2001, Costanza 2009), demonstrates the popularity of the genre, and their variants show its capacity to adapt to local traditions its content, not fixed by a single doctrine.

Ancient sources allude to diviners providing services very similar to those of physiognomists, who could also predict future. Some authors, for instance Pliny, call *metōposcopoi* the specialists deducing the future from facial features (*HN* 35.88). Such specialists could be women. In *Miles gloriosus* (692–4), Plautus offers a precious list of female experts, all hired by a woman, too: Periplectomenus enumerates the expenses incurred by a superstitious wife on gifts for diviners, all female, possibly as a joke (Traill 2004): for the spell caster (*praecantrix*), the interpreter of dreams (*coniectrix*), the deviner (*hariola*), the interpreter of prodigies (*haruspica*), and “the woman who reads the eyebrows” (*quae supercilio spicit*).

Consulting such figures was not reserved to women. The elite often had recourse to them too, as they could contribute to providing ruling legitimacy. Thus, according to Suetonius (*Life of Titus* 2.1), Narcissus, the freedman of Claudius, brought in a *metōposcopos* who asserted that Britannicus would never become emperor (on predictions made to Sulla, see Velleius Paterculus, *Roman History*, 2.24.3).

Traces of the diffusion of this pseudo-science may be found in iconography. It could explain the depiction of warts or moles on Roman portraits, especially of the republican period, traditionally attributed to the Roman taste for verism (Dasen 2007, 2008). It must

be noted that no portrait presents a mole on the nose, which would confirm that a sign of the sort could be subject to indecent and deprecatory interpretations, and that all portraits are male, with one exception (Dasen 2008, fig. 6 a and b). Melampous did not convince women to leave their moles to posterity; positive predictions did not counterbalance the apprehension of an unflattering effect on seductiveness.

Guide to Further Reading

Concerning dream interpretation, scholars of the Graeco-Roman world have been discovering the interest of dreams in the past 20 years (Weber 2000, Walde 2001, Näf 2004). They have shown how dream interpretation worked as a divinatory technique acknowledged by people at all levels of society. It played a role in the political sphere as well as in everyday life. Dreams told by ancient historiography, literature and papyri make up an important part of the material, but most of it comes from Artemidorus' *Dreambook*, the only of its kind preserved. This treaty still aroused Freud's interest (in his *Traumdeutung* of 1899). Later, Foucault showed in his *History of Sexuality* (Foucault 1984) how important Artemidorus is for this topic. Pack 1963 provides a good edition of the Greek text. The English annotated translation by White 1975 is useful too, even if it is now replaced by Harris-McCoy 2012 (Greek text, English translation, commentary).

The ancient sources on physiognomony (i.e., the treatises and also many short passages from Greek and Latin authors) were collected and published by Foerster 1893. English translations of the main treatises can be found in Swain 2007. Elizabeth Evans has devoted many articles to this art, and her main synthesis (Evans 1969) is a general presentation of physiognomic sources and methods. Philosophical studies of these methods have been proposed by Armstrong 1958, Manetti 1993, Tsouna 1998, and Boys-Stones 2007.

Corporeal divination was long neglected by scholars as a degenerated subgroup of physiognomy (Bouché-Leclercq 1879). A new interest developed since a decade. Ancient sources on palmoscopy have partly been collected by Diels 1908 and 1909, with the addition of papyri by Hurst 2001, Papathomas 2004, and Costanza 2003. In 2009 Costanza published a new edition of the palmomantic texts (manuscripts and papyri), with introduction and Italian translation. Apart from studies on Mesopotamian divination (Bottéro 1974, Böck 2000), no synthesis yet exists. Preliminary work on Melampous'

treatises (Dasen 2007–2009) will be completed with the publication of extant treatises (Dasen and Zubler forthcoming).

Notes

1 The first part of this chapter was translated by Thomas K. Hubbard, the second part by Claudia Eisen Murphy. The section “Dream Interpretation” was authored by Christophe Chandezon; the section “Physiognomy” by Jérôme Wilgaux; and the section “Body Divination” by Véronique Dasen.

2 Since some chapters of Artemidorus are very long, we will also refer to the page number in Pack's 1963 edition: this number follows the siglum “P” (which stands for “Pack”).

3 Greek edition: Pack 1963; annotated English translation: White 1975; text with English translation and commentary: Harris-McCoy 2012.

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Chapter 19

Sex in Ancient Greek and Roman Epic

Ingrid E. Holmberg

The strange dynamic which, in Western culture, binds death into desire is not the product of a marginal pathological imagination, but crucial in the formation of that culture.

Jonathon Dollimore (1998, xii)

The reach of desire involves every lover in an activity of the imagination.

Anne Carson (1986, 63)

Sex, death, and a powerful act of the imagination.

Protesilaos, the first Greek to land at Troy, dies at the hands of Hektor. His wife Laodameia passionately desires her husband even after death, and, having created an image similar to him, she repeatedly has sex with the likeness (West 2003 = *Cypria*, *Argumentum* 10).¹ This short scene, which relates a tangential moment in the great arc of the Trojan War narrative, encapsulates not only Dollimore's "strange dynamic" of *erōs* (desire) and *thanatos* (death), but also the more complex relationship between *erōs* and acts of the imagination suggested by Carson.² Laodameia demonstrates her uxorial devotion to her husband Protesilaos by loving him "even after his death": the ancient Greek sentence creates the illusion, prevented by the rules of grammar, that Laodameia loved death instead of her husband. Or perhaps, after his death, she does love death; later sources contribute that she follows her husband to the underworld very shortly after his demise (Hyginus 103–4). The verb "to make" (*poiein*) in ancient Greek, which describes Laodameia's creation of the image of her husband, suggests both the literal "making" of the artifact that is the statue, a literal "re-membling" of Laodameia's young husband, and the "making" of a fictional narrative (*poiēma*)—

another kind of “remembering” in the archaic culture of oral composition.

Despite the tangibility of the Protesilaos statue, the notion of a lifeless image as an object of erotic passion highlights the inextricable poignancy of loss as a companion of sexual desire: Dollimore further suggests that the act of sex, even in its immediacy, is already imbricated not only with desire, but also with absence and loss; sexual desire becomes a phantom at the moment of its most intense actuality (Dollimore 1998, xv). The Laodameia and Protesilaos episode reflects this concept of sexual desire and activity as a phantom activity, as absence or loss in presence, through its reification of loss in the image of Protesilaos. Such a paradigm posits sexual attraction itself as the pursuit of an image enabled by a fictional narrative: absence and loss inform the present but ever evaporating sexual activity and desire. An existential lack or loss will become an increasingly important aspect of the conceptualization of sex in western culture: “As soon as desire is something felt by a mortal being for a mortal being, eros (or desire-in-general) will always be to some degree agitated by the anticipation of loss—an anticipation that operates even with regard to what is not yet possessed” (Staten 1995, xi).³ In the case of Laodameia, her sexual passion impels her not merely to recall her dead lover through insubstantial memories, but to fashion a memorial sculpture of her husband with which she can recreate their sexual passion. Simultaneous to its narrative about the strength of passionate love and its ability to transcend death, the episode thus also broaches the notion that sexual passion and activity have an intimate, perhaps dependent, relationship with remembering and fictionality through the introduction of Laodameia's image of her dead husband.

Introduction

Sex in the major Greek and Roman epics has received surprisingly little attention, given that the scholarly industry in sex has become, even for the ancient Greek and Roman worlds, extensive. There may be several reasons for the relative lack of interest in epic sex. First, and obviously, the epics are not predominantly “about” sexual encounters; scholars in general focus on the grand themes of heroism, homecoming, and nation building, with asides to any sexual activity that precedes or ensues. Individual scenes of sexual activity in epics inspire some commentary as part of a scholarly focus on other areas of interest, but most work on sexuality in the Greek and Roman worlds provides cursory coverage of the epics.⁴ Sex in epic is simply not

viewed as important for understanding these narratives. Second, the predominant heterosexuality of the sexual encounters in epics allows them to fly under the radar; scholars have not taken on the task of questioning the fundamental drama of heterosexual sexual encounters in epics because heterosexuality reads as normative and thus does not stimulate the same interest as the simultaneity of the strong cultural recognition and representation of both homosexuality and heterosexuality in later periods.⁵ Scholarship on homosexuality, combined with feminist theory, has largely driven the study of sexuality in the ancient Greek and Roman cultures, and this aspect of the study of sexuality has found little ground in the epics. As Froma Zeitlin notes, the “historical vicissitudes” of those most “defined by the ruling norms according to their ‘sexuality’” have produced a theoretical advancement in the understanding of sexuality while perhaps under-theorizing heterosexuality (Zeitlin 1999, 53–4; see also Karras 2000, 1260). The heterosexuality of the ancient Greek and Roman epics has accordingly been under-theorized and thus appears transparent.

The “history” of sexuality to which Zeitlin alludes in her phrase “historical vicissitudes” also encounters challenges in Homeric epic. First, the apparent transparency of heterosexuality encourages an approach that treats heterosexual behavior ahistorically: “there is an implicit assumption that Greek heterosexuality, and the power dynamics that characterized it, were less radically different from our own, less determined by historical factors than homosexuality was” (Gilhuly 2009, 9). These comments from Gilhuly refer to ancient Greek culture, but they could equally refer to the early Roman Empire in which Virgil was composing the *Aeneid*. Second, with the Homeric texts, historical contextualization is virtually impossible; we must face the acute lack of information external to the Homeric poems about sexual activity whatever the century to which we assign them: we are confined to examining the epics, with no recourse to any external factors (see Ormand 2009, 21–2). The lack of evidence from these periods intensifies the problematics inherent to any investigation of sexuality in the ancient world, in which the gulf between ideological cultural representation and actual practice is already wide.⁶ The impossibility of situating the Homeric epics firmly in a sexual historical setting forces us to examine the sex within the texts as its own discursive system.⁷ It is important to add here that the lack of overt homosexual sex in the epics does not mean that it did not exist culturally or locally, but simply that the epics do not represent it.⁸ The Homeric epics thus present “a system of discourse” (Karras 2000, 1252) about sex, and sex exists purely and only as a cultural construct; I will thus approach sexuality, which means heterosexuality, in the

Greek epics and in the cycle as a self-contained discourse, namely as a cultural and narrative construct.⁹ When I turn to the *Aeneid*, despite its historicity, I will continue to address sex as a construct within the epic genre.

Sex before the War

The Homeric texts present numerous short, unmarked references to sex that employ a relatively small and discrete vocabulary for sexual passion and sexual activity.¹⁰ The extent of these instances in the apparently modest Homeric epics is surprising and introduces us to the basic vocabulary for sex: “to mingle” (*misgein*), “lovemaking” (*philotēs*), and the verb related to *erōs* (*eramai*). Poseidon and other gods in congress with mostly mortal women predominate, and the productivity of the union of a divine male and a mortal female is a resonant theme throughout the epic cycle, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* (West 2003 = *Thebaid* Fr. 11; *Iliad* 16.181–2; *Odyssey* 1.73, 7.61, 11.238–48, 11.268, 11.306).¹¹ Divine sexual contact with mortals re-infuses divinity into the mortal race and through exceptional or heroic offspring permits mortals to be touched by immortality again, although mortality remains the existential characteristic of these children (Herakles being the exception). The words for sex also share a certain semantic field with death: we see “to mingle,” “lovemaking,” other verbs associated with sexual intercourse, the verb for sexual “conquering,” and a verb for “concealment” frequently in contexts related to death, destruction, and war. Achilles, whose own irrational passion for killing will occupy several of the latter books of the epic, advises his Myrmidons to return (with Patroklos) to battle, which they “loved” before (*Iliad* 16.208; see *Iliad* 9.64, 5.143, 13.636–8, 15.510).¹² *Thanatos* or its equivalent “covers” and “conquers” slain warriors, just as *erōs* “covers” and “conquers” Paris and Zeus in *Iliad* 3 and 14 respectively (*Iliad* 5.68; 12.116; 16.351; 20.417; *Odyssey* 4.180). At least in the Homeric texts, a desire for war seems to be subject to the regulatory structure identified by Foucault for food, sleep, and sex. As part of its construction of the analogy between *erōs* and *thanatos*, the *Iliad* allows a passion for the death dealings of war and descriptions of death itself to share the vocabulary of eroticism.

The canonization of the *Iliad* in particular obscures the beginnings of the Trojan War in erotic [mis]behavior. The immediate cause of the Trojan War, the seizure or rape of Helen, is the primary focus of the cyclic *Cypria* (“the *Cypria* encompasses the seizure of Helen”: *Cypria*, *Testimonia* West), but the background to this particular sexual event

includes episodes from the *Cypria* which are equally driven by sexual deeds. Zeus' plan for the Trojan portion of the destruction of the human race entwines Helen as the face of *erōs* and Achilles as the face of *thanatos*: the plan of Zeus involves the simultaneous “marriage of Thetis (Achilles' mother) to a mortal and the birth of a beautiful daughter (Helen), from which causes arose the war between the Greeks and the barbarians” (*Cypria* Fr. 1 West).¹³ In the *Cypria*, Helen is the product of a union between Zeus and an unwilling Nemesis: “Nemesis, although having mingled with Zeus in lovemaking by forceful necessity, did not wish to be mingled in sex because of shame and righteous indignation” (*Cypria* Fr. 10 West). Thetis' marriage celebration to Peleus is determined by Zeus, and the displeasure of Strife, excluded at Zeus' orders, sets in motion the Judgment of Paris, apparently also orchestrated by Zeus. The *Iliad* itself provides one further detail about the marriage of Peleus and Thetis: Thetis' unwillingness to participate in sex with Peleus, and his use of force against her (18.433–4). Thus each of the mortal causes of the war is represented as the product of unwilling sex: Zeus imposes his will upon the cosmos through parallel incidents of forceable sexual activity. The violence of the encounters and the unwillingness of the women function as appropriate predecessors to the violence of the war itself and as metaphors for Zeus' ultimate control over the fate of mankind.

The next phase of Zeus' over-arching plan involves a more opaque sexual incident. The transfer of Helen from Sparta to Troy—whether the event occurs, again, through rape and abduction or Helen is a willing sexual partner—has been described as an “originary moment” in the Greek cultural narrative, and one informed by sex: “If in the beginning there is war, at the beginning of the war there is always Helen and the ‘painful lewdness’ (24.30) that Paris chose one fine morning in a cool vale of Ida” (Loraux 1995, 195). Aphrodite's interpretation of her obligation to Paris includes not only erotic assistance, but attention to more practical matters: the goddess ensures that ships are built for the voyage to Sparta, and furthermore the goddess even accompanies Paris to Sparta (*Cypria*, *Argumentum* 1 West; Fr. 8 West). Once Paris has arrived in Sparta, Aphrodite “leads” Helen to Paris, and after this “mingling” they leave for Troy (*Cypria*, *Argumentum* 2 West). This version shuns reference to rape or force on Paris' part, although a scholion to the *Iliad* specifically describes Paris “seizing” Helen (*Cypria* Fr. 19 West; see also *Iliad* 3.444 for Paris “seizing” Helen). Prior to the Trojan War, “Helen was previously seized by the hero Theseus” (*Cypria* Fr. 12 West). One further episode concerning Aphrodite and Helen merits consideration. In Proclus' summary of the *Cypria* we learn that Achilles “desires to look upon

Helen” and that Aphrodite and Thetis “lead them together”; the text uses the same word as when Aphrodite leads Helen to Paris (*Cypria*, *Argumentum* 11 West). Achilles' encounter with Helen convinces Achilles to deny the other Greeks' desire to return to Greece and to persist in the destructive war. The first encounter with Paris begins the war, the second encounter with Achilles extends the devastation on both sides. This coupling of Helen and Achilles in Proclus may reflect the importance of their intertwined narrative for the origin of the war and the recognition of Helen's and Achilles' shared function as purveyors of death and destruction. Thus sex permeates the background narrative concerning Zeus' plans and the beginning of the Trojan War: Zeus wishes destruction and death for mortals, which he accomplishes through his own sexual activity and that of his mortal pawns. In this way sex and death enact their eternal embrace.

Sex and the Iliadic Man

In the *Iliad* itself *erōs* and *thanatos* attend the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon, which sets the narrative in motion. Just as Paris' seizure of Helen causes conflict between himself and Menelaos on the personal level and has deadly consequences on the wider political level, so Agamemnon's treatment of Achilles also results in the deaths of numerous Greeks during Achilles' absence. While the objectified female Briseis symbolizes the honor and status at the core of the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon, nevertheless central to the exchange of this woman is the final enactment of possession—sexual relations: Agamemnon pointedly insists that the embassy tell Achilles that he swears a great oath that he has never mounted the bed of Briseis nor “mingled with her” (9.133, 9.275 and 19.176).¹⁴ Agamemnon's statement acknowledges the importance of the sexual aspect of his possession of Briseis and implies that, by giving her back to Achilles without having had sex with her, he offers the possibility for a proffered reconciliation between the two leaders. Thersites' insults—directed at the rapacious Agamemnon's right to “be mingled in lovemaking” (2.232) with women captured by the Greeks—underline Agamemnon's anomalous treatment of Briseis and his tacit recognition of the dangerous problematics of her seizure. This woman's untouched return to Achilles corrects the matter of the unfairly confiscated prize. Achilles' own sexual repossession of Briseis (24.676), following his mother's encouragement that “it is a good thing to mingle in lovemaking with a woman” (24.130–1), accomplishes closure of the quarrel between the two Greek leaders

while also confirming Achilles' return to humanity. The repositioning of the woman firmly in the appropriate household concludes the reestablishment of the relationship between Achilles and Agamemnon and also enacts normative heterosexual behavior.

The narrative of Anteia and Bellerophon in *Iliad* 6 vividly represents the severance of male bonds over a sexual issue that the Achilles–Agamemnon–Briseis triangle eventually avoids. Furthermore, the *Iliad* incorporates a narrative in which a sexually desirous female creates her own fiction. According to Glaukos, Anteia “became crazy to be mingled in lovemaking with his ancestor Bellerophon in secret” (6.160–1). Upon Bellerophon's refusal, Anteia reverses the story and claims that Bellerophon “wanted to be mingled with her although she did not desire it” (6.165), converting her concealed passion for Bellerophon into a fictional unwillingness. This narrative also introduces the construct of the deceptive female who conceals or denies her very real sexual desire; her denied desire impels her to recreate an absent sexual engagement, a fictional tale whose goal is the death of her object of desire. This short interlude reflects and exemplifies the ancient Greek ideological attitude that female sexuality, most especially the sexuality of a subjective or active woman, is deceptive and dangerous. But the episode also introduces a particularly Iliadic construction of sexuality that, in addition to the ever present bond between sex and death, links sex and narrative. Sexual activity is made present through the embedded [false] narrative that is intended for destruction rather than seduction, and Anteia's story begins the *Iliad*'s peculiar embedding of narratives of sex that accomplish seductions as well as threaten death and destruction. The following embedded tales of sex, however, remember previous actual sexual encounters and lead to a revival of current sexual interest; the remembering of past and absent sexual encounters not only makes present the absent past, but facilitates the creation of the present sexual activity.

In *Iliad* 3 Paris remembers an earlier sexual encounter with Helen, and his narrative of that event as he prepares to engage with her sexually, in the midst of the war, reconstructs that erotic moment as it fuels the present one. The episode commences with Aphrodite's over-exaggerated stage-managing, an allusion perhaps to her intervention in their original encounter. Aphrodite perceives the threat to Paris in his fight with Menelaos, “seizes” her favorite back from the fray (3.380), and delivers him to Helen's bedchamber. Paris' “seizure,” like Helen's, emphasizes his helplessness at the hands of Aphrodite, which he has openly and without shame acknowledged to his brother Hektor (3.64–6). Aphrodite also overpowers the fiercely resistant Helen, forcing Helen to reprise her role as cause of the Trojan War in the

Cypria, at the same time as Helen's and Paris' continuing relationship in this retrospective scene forms the basis for the perpetuation of the current conflict within the *Iliad*. When Aphrodite has successfully positioned the couple within their bedchamber, Paris explicitly articulates his feelings in sexual terms that recall that earlier sexual encounter:

Come on, let us enjoy lovemaking and having sex,
For not ever thus has *erōs* covered my wits,
Not even when, having seized you from lovely Sparta
I was sailing in ships cleaving the sea,
And I mingled with you in lovemaking and sex on Kranae,
As now I love you and sweet desire seizes me.

(*Il.* 3.441–6)

Paris moves nimbly from the original encounter, when *erōs* first covered his thoughts, to the present one, in which he desires Helen even more; the Trojan's speech demonstrates a parallelism between memory of past erotic experience and his hopes for the present. Finally, Paris markedly feels “desire” for Helen, in contrast to her revived “desire” for Menelaos (3.139).¹⁵ The complex question of Helen's sexual desire is a topic that the *Iliad* treats with great finesse. In *Iliad* 3 Helen is the object of Paris' sexual desire, but the epic never describes her as experiencing desire for him, even though she succumbs. If much of Helen's and Paris' activity in *Iliad* 3 is the *Iliad*'s representation and remembering of the originary moments of their relationship, then the epic seems to be arrogating responsibility from Helen not only by objectifying her, but also by denying her active erotic desire in this affair. Helen's renewed desire for Menelaos, however, coheres with her repeated assertions of guilt throughout the *Iliad* and her wishes that the invidious events that caused the war had never occurred. Her desire is now properly directed toward her Greek husband and the reestablishment of her first marriage, thus projecting for Helen the possibility of redemption—which is fulfilled, however uneasily, in the domestic scene in Sparta in *Odyssey* 4.

If the sexual encounter of Helen and Paris in *Iliad* 3 illustrates the dangers of mortal *erōs*, then the sexual encounter of Zeus and Hera in *Iliad* 14, which has marked similarities to *Iliad* 3, demonstrates the perils of immortal *erōs*. Zeus, whose over-arching plan for the cosmos has previously ensnared mortals through *erōs*, is now ensnared. Hera puts in motion her own “plan” (14.161) to divert Zeus' gaze from the battlefield by tricking him into “lovemaking” with her (14.163 and see 331); but, because of the apparently passionless state of her marriage, Hera must request from Aphrodite “lovemaking and desire” (14.198), with which Aphrodite “conquers” (14.199) mortals and gods. Hera, as

Zeitlin points out, cannot simply “enforce her desire” as a male can, but must instigate the male's desire (1999, 68). Hera persuades Aphrodite to lend her the belt imbued with things necessary for seduction by creating a fictitious narrative about the marriage of Oceanus and Tethys, in which their quarreling and estrangement mirror her own union. To the goddess of love, who has a vested interest in the erotic aspects of this relationship, Hera emphasizes “lovemaking”: her grandparents hold back from “lovemaking” with each other (14.207), and she would be forever in Aphrodite's debt if she could set these two on a bed, to be united in “lovemaking” (14.209). Like Anteaia, Hera composes a false tale about sexual behavior in order to accomplish her own goals. Aphrodite proceeds to give Hera her special belt, on which reside “lovemaking, desire, and intimate conversation” (14. 216). Eustathius' supposition that Aphrodite wore this same belt for the Judgment of Paris suggests further connections between the disruptive possibilities of this scene and the power of *erōs* in the *Cypria* (Janko 1992, 185). While “lovemaking” and “desire” are familiar erotic markers, “intimate conversation” is less common, and this rather unusual phrase will strike a chord when we find it again in Hektor's musings about his relationship with Achilles in *Iliad* 22. Hera also enlists Sleep, the brother of Death (14.231), asking him to put sleep on the eyes of Zeus after their “lovemaking” (14.237). For the deathless gods, the incapacity of mind that Sleep offers parallels death and fundamentally challenges Zeus' authority; when he is asleep, he cannot keep his protective gaze on the action of the war.

Erōs covers Zeus' shrewd thoughts, just as it had covered Paris' thoughts in *Iliad* 3:

And when he saw her, then *erōs* covered his shrewd mind
Just as when first they had been mingled in lovemaking.

(*Il.* 14.294–5; see 3.442–5)

In response to Zeus' inquiry about her arrival, Hera recomposes the narrative by which she had manipulated Aphrodite, adjusting it like a bard for the benefit of her audience. She repeats the marital troubles of their grandparents (14.206–7 = 14.305–6), but instead of asserting her commitment to reunite the couple sexually, Hera submissively says that she has come to apprise him of her trip to their grandparents, lest he become angry later. Zeus, under the compulsion of *erōs*, repeats Paris' line to Helen: “let us enjoy lovemaking and having sex” (14.314 = 3.441), and he also offers a narrative of sex: not his past sexual history that he shares with his wife, but his robust sexual encounters with a foundational series of goddesses and semi-goddesses. Zeus' focus on his extra-marital relationships greatly

amplifies Paris' words, while at the same time distancing or depersonalizing his erotic attraction for his wife; while Paris' exclamation focuses exclusively on his past and present passion for Helen, Zeus compares his passion for Hera to his other conquests: "not ever has thus love of a goddess or a woman conquered my soul" (14.315–16). As befits his Olympian status as a lover, Zeus repeats the "not even when" refrain six times, listing as his other lovers ("I loved," 14.317) Ixion's wife, Danaë, Europa, Semele, Alkmene, Demeter, and Leto: seven women over whom he and Hera have quarreled, but also women who have each born him a heroic child, a fitting mortal offspring of the king of the gods: Not even then did *erōs* conquer Zeus as now he "loves Hera and desire seizes him" (14.328 = 3.446).¹⁶ Zeus' memorializing narrative is, as befits the king of gods and men, cosmic, while Paris' is individualized. The mentioning of numerous liaisons exemplifies Zeus' virility, his "phallic potency" (Gilhuly 2009, 22), while balancing the loss of stability and power, however temporary, that Hera's seduction is currently effecting. After the lovemaking, the potential of Aphrodite's belt has been realized, and Zeus is indeed "conquered" by "lovemaking" and sleep (14.353).

The sexual escapades of Paris and Helen, from their meeting in Sparta to their dalliance in *Iliad* 3, have always been part of Zeus' over-arching plan. His amused reaction, at the beginning of *Iliad* 4, to the dilemma presented by an unexpected peace between the Achaeans and Trojans at this juncture expresses his continuing sense of control over his plot, as he goads Hera and Athena into further action. The fatal danger of Paris' sexual attraction to Helen, whose result is being played out in the *Iliad*, is magnified in the cosmic danger of Zeus' sexual attraction to Hera, an attraction that not only upsets the traditional sexual hierarchy of male dominance but also threatens the cosmic political order, just as Paris' attraction threatens mortal political order.¹⁷ Zeus' reaction in *Iliad* 15 to the disarming of his controlling gaze through sleep after sex with Hera fully demonstrates Hera's eccentric challenge, which has already been highlighted during the episode through repeated references to her "conquering" of Zeus: upon awakening, Zeus threatens Hera, asking her whether the "lovemaking and sex" (15.32–3) will protect her. Hera's ability to create her own plan and to manipulate Aphrodite, Sleep, and Zeus himself illustrates her own effective powers, an element missing from Helen's characterization at the end of *Iliad* 3; the goddess, unlike the mortal, assumes control of her sexual attractiveness, which she then employs in the register of the political. Her counterplan also importantly reaffirms her agonistic relationship with Zeus; the language of aggression is thus completely appropriate in the context of erotics. Furthermore, in this episode both Hera and Zeus use

narratives as a means of creating, controlling, and composing a sexual encounter: Hera's false narrative primarily influences Aphrodite and functions merely as an explanation for Zeus, while Zeus' narratives play a more fundamental role in the exercise of his present sexual desire.

In addition to the exploration of *erōs* in these episodes in *Iliad* 3 and 14, the text also draws attention to its own construction and to the interplay between *erōs* and narrative. Bergren reminds us that, in the Teichoskopia ("Viewing from the Walls") episode in *Iliad* 3, Helen's weaving constitutes "a reflection of the poetic process in the *Iliad*," just as the traditionality of the Teichoskopia itself also "points to the process of its creation" (Bergren 1980, 23). The *Iliad* continues this rumination on its own creation later in Book 3 and in Book 14, where Bergren recognizes the textual/narrative self-consciousness as "unstable artifice" (Bergren 1980, 26). Both Paris' and Zeus' words recompose extra-Iliadic material as facilitation for current sexual desire, drawing attention to the work of narrative in sexual desire and seduction. The males' acts of memory and reconstruction, and these acts' role in current pleasure, resemble the act of memory and reconstruction and their role in the audience's pleasure, which comprise epic composition. Zeus' and Paris' speeches remember sexual encounters just as the *Iliad* itself remembers the events of the war, and the speeches represent their own textuality as they replace the absent events. The Iliadic scenes compress writer (Paris and Zeus) and reader (Helen and Hera) with lover and beloved, while the *Iliad* enacts a similar exchange with its "readers": "To write is to behave as an *erastēs*. To read is to behave as an *erōmenos* ... To write is to be dominant, active, triumphant, as long as one finds a reader prepared to be amenable" (Svenbro 1993, 192).¹⁸ In a similar vein, Roland Barthes' *The Pleasure of the Text* celebrates the shared erotic elements of text and sex in its examination of a writer's creation of "bliss," which occurs at the site where writer and reader meet, a site of "the possibility of a dialectics of desire, of an *unpredictability* of bliss" (Barthes 1975, 4).¹⁹ Furthermore, the remembering of the previous sex act, embedded as it is in the actual moment, announces the present sexual encounter's process of becoming a memory, and begins the process of destruction: the sexual act already becomes a phantom at the moment of its most intense actuality. The memory of erotic events from the past creates a kind of embedded distancing or absence in the current encounter, which enables desire, and particularly the heightened quality of the moment. In this sense, both of these scenes are also already situating the couples' lovemaking as a future memory, which of course the episodes become upon their inclusion in the epic narrative. The memory of absent sex influences the present sexual

encounter as that same encounter flees its own existence, creating a moment when time ceases to exist and “the haunting stillness of non-being” engulfs the lovers (Dollimore 1998, xvi). Narrative re-creates the shadowy past of sex and heroic death, becoming the stimulus for more sex and heroic death. The *Iliad* is predominately read as the sign and the *kleos* (“fame”) for heroic death, but *Iliad* 3 and later *Iliad* 14 nevertheless represent sex as equally requiring the sustenance of narrative.

Erōs inhabits one final episode in the *Iliad*. In Book 22, Hektor famously concludes to himself, as he ponders the future confrontation with Achilles, that “it is not in any way possible to have an intimate conversation” with him (22.126–7), the type of lovers' talk in which a maiden and a youth engage (22.128). Hektor's internal narrative, even while denying that it is possible to engage intimately with Achilles, nevertheless entertains that possibility, evoking a sexual intimacy between the two opposing warriors. The immediately preceding lines, in which Hektor likens himself to a woman in his “nakedness” (22.124–5) as he comes to Achilles in imaginary supplication, increase the erotic content of the following lines, and their highly emotional impact has always resided in the juxtaposition of this latent eroticism and Hektor's imminent death. Although Hektor envisages his projected vulnerability to Achilles as a feminine nakedness and then further imagines a conversation between a male and a female, the implicit homoeroticism that now attaches to the imagined meeting between Hektor and Achilles is undeniable; scholars such as Vernant have situated these lines within the context of the masculine erotics of the “beautiful death.” After Hektor's death, the image of his unprotected body is further eroticized through an emphasis on its softness (22.373–4) and the penetrating spears of the Greeks. As Nicole Loraux remarks, the *Iliad* “eroticizes warfare” by representing particularly this crucial encounter as an “amorous struggle” (1995, 98).²⁰

Like other Iliadic lovers, Hektor creates a narrative surrounding the imminent encounter by articulating two potential scenarios within six lines: his supplication of Achilles, naked like a woman; and intimate, erotic conversation between himself and Achilles. Hektor's strange “illusory world of fiction” translates the reality of death, which he faces, first into a gender-bending scene of submission to his enemy (Loraux 1995, 81). Hektor then slides from the feminized submissive position of supplication toward an unlikely erotic encounter with his enemy in which he also inhabits the feminine; Hektor's wishful transposition of Achilles' domination to the safer, more reciprocal erotic level implied by “intimate conversation,” his fictional vision, will not come to fruition. The *Iliad* fiercely and tragically tightens the connection between *erōs* and *thanatos* through the mechanism of

Hektor's internal fiction, which depicts not the death he knows to be imminent but an entirely fictional, erotic scenario in its place, thus presenting an "opposition which presupposes a basic analogy between these two ways of 'rapprochement,' of meeting and getting together" (Vernant 1991, 99). But, even in his self-protective delusion, Hektor recognizes the reality of his situation, that the erotic possibilities of his desperate narratives will never occur and will never be sung; as he says to himself, "it is NOT possible to speak the language of *erōs* to Achilles." A very different narrative contact will play out, one that Hektor avoids confronting for the moment. At the instant before Hektor's poignant death and the brutal violence upon his body, the epic conjures the pleasure of a fictional *erōs* as the text proceeds to provide the pleasure of the memory of one of the great martial deeds of a hero of the past.

Odyssean Sex

The *Odyssey's* attitude toward sexual activity includes the *Iliad's* stance that sex can have repercussions of death and destruction, although the hero himself escapes the dangers of his own sexual encounters, unlike the characters in the epic cycle and in the *Iliad*, for whom the effects of sexual activity reverberate throughout the extended narrative. The *Odyssey* also significantly expands into the possibility of sexual activity without fatal results, particularly around the reunion of Odysseus and Penelope, and mutual pleasure becomes a more important factor in the heterosexual unions. Furthermore, the returning Odysseus punishes the handmaidens and the suitors for their own sexual misadventures and missteps, presenting the enforcement of an explicit morality toward sexual activity in the domestic atmosphere of Ithaca. Obviously the larger circumstances of the Trojan War reflect a moral view of the relationship of Paris and Helen, but neither the text of the *Iliad* nor the fragments of the cycle suggest punishment for either Paris or Helen; their affair registers on the international and cosmic levels rather than domestically. The *Odyssey*, however, explicitly identifies the immorality of the sexual behavior of the handmaidens (and of the suitors) and enforces their punishment. The unique relationship between *erōs* and narrative that I argue for in the *Iliad* seems to be largely, although not entirely, absent from the *Odyssey*; perhaps the domestication of sexual behavior prevents this incorporation of sex on a constructive narrative level, or perhaps the Odyssean tradition, so proud of its own narrative pyrotechnics and so committed to the paradigm of the hero as poet and of the poet as

hero, resists contemplating a counter-dependency between erotics and narrative. Or, finally—perhaps the text's own template—sex is not inescapable and thus not somehow cosmically determined; sex is expressed as subject to choice and to mortal moral judgment. The text ultimately diminishes the power of erotic passion as a force that creates a narrative world, either on the large scale of epic narratives or on the smaller, parallel scale of personal narrative.

The references to the enforced sexual relationship between Odysseus and Kalypso in the opening lines of the *Odyssey* announce the importance of sex, however; the epic starts with its own hero at the mercy of a sexually active female, who has desire and the power to satisfy that desire. Kalypso's name itself, “the one who conceals,” recalls the covering effect of *erōs* on Paris and Zeus in the *Iliad* (3.442 and 14.294) and of *thanatos* on vanquished warriors. The verb *kaluptein*'s applicability to both sex and death suggests Kalypso's own combination of *erōs* and *thanatos*: her offer, to Odysseus, of a semi-divine life as her consort mingles in equal proportion the promise of her sexual favors with the lethal oblivion produced by her isolated island home.²¹ Kalypso “restrains” Odysseus (1.14; 1.55; and by force 5.14) because she “desires that he be her husband” (1.15); Athena tells Zeus that Kalypso “charms Odysseus so that he forgets Ithaca” (1.57). Odysseus, however, always has another longing, namely for his homeland and his wife (1.13); he “desires” to see his homeland (1.58), and even “desires to die” (1.59).²² Kalypso's desire for Odysseus and her deathlike hold over him conversely create in the hero a parallel desire for actual death: death and desire together again. The couple's contrasting desires are re-enforced by the primary narrative's description of their sexual relationship: Kalypso no longer pleases him, but he unwillingly sleeps with the goddess who does wish it (5.153–5).

Odysseus' unwillingness and Kalypso's desire recall other Homeric instances of unwelcome sex forced upon an unwilling partner: Anteia's lying words in *Iliad* 6, Thetis' description of her pursuit by Peleus at *Iliad* 18.443–4, and Zeus' treatment of Nemesis in the epic cycle, in all of which cases rape is suggested. Odysseus' assumption of the powerless position of a female rape victim reflects dramatically and provocatively his helplessness and the power dynamic between himself and Kalypso: an anomalous differential between a male and a female, but not perhaps between a mortal and a god. The dichotomy between Odysseus' expressed unwillingness and his actual sexual engagement with Kalypso seems to embody the disintegration of the self that *erōs* can accomplish: Zeitlin's remarks about a self “who is both willing and unwilling, both subject and object of a desire that is conceived as emanating from a coercive external source, whether in

the personified form of the god Eros or in the irresistible attraction exercised by the beloved” and the “submission to another's control” seem to describe Odysseus' bizarre situation (Zeitlin 1999, 55).²³ The *Odyssey's* emphasis on Odysseus' misery masks his sexual responsiveness to Kalypso's “force” or “charms,” just as the conflicting descriptions of Kalypso's method of compulsion obscure the nature of the power that overwhelms him.

The *Odyssey* corrects the anomalous power dynamic between Kalypso and Odysseus after the goddess obeys Zeus' command to release Odysseus, and Odysseus, distrusting this salvation, forces Kalypso to swear a great oath to him at sword point. Only at this moment, when Odysseus is dominant, does the couple “enjoy lovemaking” mutually, and for the first time in their encounter “lovemaking” is used (5.227). While both Paris and Zeus had invited their beloveds to enjoy “lovemaking” in *Iliad* 3 and 14, the text remains silent about the females' enjoyment, and it encourages doubt through Helen's resistance and Hera's manipulations. But here the *Odyssey* not only converts the threatening power of the female but also introduces reciprocal sexual enjoyment as a possible paradigm. Before Kalypso and Odysseus retire to bed, however, the nymph remembers short narratives about the sexual dalliances of other goddesses with mortals, narratives in which female divine desire is cosmically scandalous, anomalous, and ideologically troublesome in just the way in which Odysseus' feminizing relationship with Kalypso overturns the “natural” order of the genders. Even more importantly, the narratives illustrate that such anomalous sexual positioning between a female goddess and a male mortal is likely to result in death; these brief epitomes recall the impulse toward narrative expression that erotic passion stimulated in Paris and Zeus in the *Iliad*, and Kalypso's narrative ability allies her with the masculine control of language demonstrated by Paris, Zeus, and Hektor in the *Iliad*. But Odysseus' domination of Kalypso subverts and denies her narratives of female sexual dominance, thwarts death, and releases him from oblivion back into his homecoming. In the *Odyssey*, once proper gender and sexual roles have been re-assumed, sex is no longer a cataclysmic cosmic event but rather one of life's pleasures.

Odysseus' relationship with Kirke reprises, although it chronologically precedes, his sojourn with Kalypso and recasts elements of enchantment, forgetting, and sexual attraction. Kalypso's “enchanting” sex (1.57) is replaced by the enchanting drugs imbibed by Odysseus and his men; the “bad” drugs charm the men into forgetting their fatherland (10.213 and 10.236), much like the food offered by the Lotus-Eaters.²⁴ Odysseus, however, who has been supplied with a “good drug” (10.287) by Hermes, is emphatically not

charmed by the drugs (10.318; 10.326) and ensures that Kirke swears the protective oath at sword point before he has sex with her. The hero thus inures himself against the possibility of sexual enchantment, which had proven so detrimental in his relationship with Kalypso: Odysseus enters into his sexual relationship with Kirke under no apparent compulsion. The couple “mingles in lovemaking in mutual trust” (10.334–5). Nevertheless, the need for Odysseus' companions to reawaken his memory of his fatherland (10.472) suggests that Odysseus has indeed forgotten his homecoming under the influence of his sexual affair with Kirke. Drugs fail, but the sex is temporarily very successful. Although Odysseus' encounter with Kirke is shorter than his time with Kalypso, the danger seems just as great, if not greater: with Kirke he enjoys their sexual relationship from the beginning; the text states no grief or desire for Ithaca on his part; and he even appears to have forgotten his homeland. Furthermore, Kirke and Odysseus share trust, a greater challenge to his desire to return home and to his reunion with Penelope. And, while Kalypso sends Odysseus more or less directly home, Kirke commands that he visit Hades in order to consult Teiresias (10.490–1), a diversion that cements firmly the identification between Kirke's erotic charms and *thanatos*.

In Ithaca, the household of Odysseus, occupied and managed only by women, under threat from sexually eager young men, bubbles with sexual opportunity and risk. Sexual events in the lives of the loyal retainers Eurykleia and Eumaios form a commentary on the constellation of sexual advantage that swirls around the handmaidens and the suitors. The first book of the epic introduces the vulnerability of young servile females, when we learn that Laertes “did not mingle with Eurykleia” (1.433). Odysseus' father specifically avoids the destructive consequences of extra-marital sex on his domestic affairs, and there may also be the implication that the sensible Eurykleia did not seek such a relationship, unlike the handmaidens. Eumaios, Odysseus' trusted swineherd, suffers enslavement as a child because of the sexual misbehavior of the household slave who minds him: while she is washing clothes, one of the Phoenician sailors “mingled secretly with her in lovemaking” (15.420–1 and 430). The slave woman steals the child Eumaios; female sexual activity and susceptibility result in his life of servitude. The handmaidens, for their part, enact the greatest fear in a household lacking a strong male leader, and their sexual activity with the suitors displaces and replaces Penelope's possible submission to their advances. The *Odyssey* condemns the sexual behavior of the handmaidens and suitors by describing their sexual encounters with the verb “to mingle,” one of the most explicit ancient Greek words for sexual intercourse, which in the latter books of the *Odyssey* comes to assume a moral aspect that

the *Iliad* avoids. Melantho, a girl for whom Penelope has particularly cared, has been “mingling with the suitor Eurymachos” (18.325) and Odysseus ominously repeats a refrain about “mingling” handmaidens as he prepares their punishment (20.7, 20.12, 22.445). The handmaidens are invariably the subject of the verb, which attributes to the girls an active sexual desire that further validates Odysseus' disdain toward them. Even though the enslaved handmaidens are the most vulnerable to sexual advances and, much worse, to sexual attacks, the *Odyssey* relentlessly condemns their capitulation as an encroachment on the inviolability of the household, its mistress, and the master's property rights.

Homeric epic's general characterization of the dangers of sexual passion forces the *Odyssey* to approach the reunion of Odysseus and Penelope with a large degree of circumspection. Penelope's abstinence and lack of overt sexual interest during Odysseus' absence ensures her semi-heroic status, while the epic works toward constructing an approach to marriage that permits sexual activity without threat. The *Odyssey's* tactic toward sex in the marriage of Penelope and Odysseus is, initially, to present their sexual activity from a respectful distance, bleaching out erotic passion (which in any event would involve danger), while still implying that their marriage maintains a sexual element. The *Odyssey's* first displacement of sexuality in the couple's marriage is the episode of Aphrodite and Ares in *Odyssey* 8; Odysseus confronts a narrative that may reflect events at his home in Ithaca by analogy with a boisterous and harmless tale about the antics of two gods. Although this divine affair avoids the disastrous effects of mortal sexual transgressions and is instead a subject of laughter, it reifies fears about Penelope and her potential sexual passion while still protecting her actual abstinence. Although the *Odyssey* maintains its policy of displacing sexuality in the marriage of Odysseus and Penelope even as the reunion of this couple approaches, nevertheless the epic acknowledges both Penelope's own sexual appeal and the sexuality of her marriage to Odysseus in an allusive fashion. We learn, for instance, that Penelope's appearance before the suitors in *Odyssey* 18 “charms” the men and arouses erotic feelings, even though the text carefully establishes that Penelope has resisted beautification and has no conscious intention of seduction: “the suitors were charmed by erotic passion” (18.212). The enchantment of the suitors by *erōs* further displaces Penelope as an active participant; she is sexually arousing without experiencing sexual desire, very much like Helen and Hera in the *Iliad* (Sissa 2008, 30). Odysseus refers obliquely to sex in their marriage when, as the beggar, he contrasts Penelope with a woman who grieves for a lesser man than Odysseus, “with whom having mingled in lovemaking she bore children” (19.266). In

anticipation of their imminent reunion Odysseus skillfully connects explicit sexual behavior with a lesser man than himself and, by implication, a lesser woman than Penelope, one who would have sexual desires, at the same time that he reminds Penelope of the sexual relationship she had in fact enjoyed with Odysseus and of the son whom they created. Odysseus composes a narrative about a (fictional?) sexual experience that functions as a seductive reawakening of Penelope's sexual history, as he moves toward the completion of his return. The text represents Odysseus, like Paris and Zeus, as using a narrative of absent sex to prepare for prospective, present sex.

The extended narrative foreplay of Odysseus and Penelope continues in *Odyssey* 23 when Penelope addresses the issue of her own sexuality allusively through her reference to Helen's sexual behavior; the most remarkable aspect of Penelope's narrative commentary is the unfamiliar degree of subjectivity or active desire that she ascribes to Helen. She says that Helen "would not have mingled in lovemaking with a foreign man" if she had known that the Greeks were going to lead her back home (23.219). Penelope represents Helen as making a decision to have sex with Paris, a decision she would have eschewed if she had known that she would be retrieved from Troy (see Felson-Rubin 1994, 39–40 and Katz 1991, 183–7 particularly on this scene). Penelope is graphic in her description of Helen's activities through her use of "mingle," which we do not find elsewhere in connection with Helen, in either the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*; the context of the use of this verb in the *Odyssey* tells us that Penelope incorporates in her comments a moral judgment on Helen's behavior at the very moment when she seems to empathize with the Spartan woman. The consequences of excessive or eccentric sex, especially voluntary sex outside marriage, are the focus of Penelope's musings, and her words perhaps indicate some kind of desire toward the suitors or even a sexual attraction toward the beggar/Odysseus. Here at the end of the *Odyssey*, Penelope's reference to Helen revisits the cause of the Trojan war, but she recasts the causality in terms of the *Odyssey's* own domestication of sex as a moral choice that Helen was capable of making, just as she herself refrains from immediately accepting any man, even the beggar/Odysseus, as her lover. Odysseus' earlier contrasting of Penelope to a sexually desirous woman suggests Penelope's own sexuality; through her own narrative, Penelope hints at her [revived] sexual desire while not acting upon it.

The erotic reunion of Penelope and Odysseus depends upon an exchange of narratives about the site of sexuality in their marriage, the bed, which allows Odysseus to prove his identity and Penelope to avoid Helen's mistake. Penelope's false story about the removal of

their marriage bed stimulates Odysseus' narrative about his creation of the bed, the shared secret *sēma* (sign) that establishes again their mutual trust, once and for all. The first description of their actual reunion is both direct and fairly tepid: they were glad to return to the “ritual” of the ancient bed (23.296). None of the words in this short sentence promises sexual passion, and several even elicit an impression of repetitive, if not explicitly unpleasant, duty. But Odysseus' and Penelope's actual encounter is marked by more familiar language for sexual activity, in addition to containing specific references to their mutual enjoyment of both sex and narrative:

After they both had enjoyed lovely lovemaking,
they enjoyed narratives while speaking to each other.

The mutual enjoyment and pleasure of a trusting relationship, which Odysseus eventually experiences with both Kalypso and Kirke, form a crucial element in his sexual reunion with Penelope. Not only do they enjoy “lovemaking,” but they also enjoy “narratives” together: unlike the useful but conflicting narratives of the trick of the bed, now the couple relates reciprocal narratives. Sissa (2008, 37–9) argues that, in Homer, desire is satisfied by pleasure, that desire ends as pleasure begins, unlike in the Platonic model, in which desire continues and is unquenchable. The reunion of Penelope and Odysseus seems to conform to such a model of mutual sexual pleasure in marriage, while at the same time the *Odyssey* itself promotes erotic passion that can be escaped or avoided—unlike the more powerful, inescapable, death-dealing *erōs* of the *Iliad*.

Sex and Empire: The *Aeneid*

Sexuality in the greatest Roman epic, the *Aeneid*, gives little evidence of the *Odyssey*'s domestication of eroticism, but rather eventually associates explicit sexual activity with destruction and death, as does the *Iliad*. The narrative trajectory of the Roman epic, from the “Odyssean” first six books to the “Iliadic” latter six, also contains a sexual trajectory from domestic to destructive. As Aeneas moves from Troy to Latium, he enacts a reversion back to Iliadic sex: he moves from the safety of his Trojan home and Trojan wife Creusa to the foreign, potentially dangerous, sexually attractive queen Dido and then to the Italian Lavinia, the cause of the battles in Italy. In the *Aeneid*, however, Creusa and Lavinia are not explicitly sexualized; the epic reveals its attitude to erotic passion through two episodes that the poem simultaneously links to the internal drama of the narrative and

then more broadly to the expanse of imperial Roman history as Virgil knows it, and perhaps as he surmises the future to be: the heterosexual encounters of Dido and Aeneas in *Aeneid* 4 and of Venus and Vulcan in *Aeneid* 8. The union between Aeneas and Dido threatens the hero's journey toward his new homeland and ends in the eroticized death of the female partner, joining *erōs* and *thanatos* at the core of this epic. The seduction of Vulcan by Venus appears to confute the threat of heterosexual sex, since this erotic moment benefits or facilitates the hero's mission as well as contributing to the ultimate founding of Rome. But the shield that Vulcan manufactures after his seduction by Venus graphically displays the violent establishment of the Roman Empire, linking sex and death yet again. Furthermore, although narrative does not play an active, acknowledged role in these sexual experiences, each sexual encounter produces a narrative of the distant future (which, from Virgil's and his audience's perspective, is a narrative of the past) as each incident interacts with the dramatic present of the *Aeneid*.

The Carthaginian ruler Dido's initial appearance as a successful leader, the founder of a city, a woman who operates in the public sphere, shares similarities with the characterizations of the independent female figures of Kalypso, Kirke, and Penelope in the *Odyssey*. The *Aeneid* does not overtly construct Dido and her political acumen as threats to Aeneas and his mission, but very quickly “the focus of the narrative ‘naturally’ narrows to Dido's sexuality, so that her political and military ambitions come to be subsumed by her inappropriate erotic desires” (Keith 1997, 297). Aeneas' own political and military ambitions, or rather his destiny, become prey to his sexual attraction to the queen. Their encounter in the cave exemplifies this epic's attitude about the danger of *erōs* and erotic unions as the narrative progresses toward appropriate political and cultural unions, which include marriage.²⁵ Aeneas' and Dido's actual sexual activity itself, however, remains hidden behind veils of words, from Dido's self-interpretation of the event to the rumor-laden opinions of those who were not present. The Virgilian text does not verify either version: “in general for such a *histoire passionelle* there is a remarkable absence of the physical details we expect in such circumstances” (Putnam 1995, 40). The narrative refuses to confirm the tragic queen's version of reality, while the cruelty of the hero's departure is diluted by the text's opacity. Although Virgil's text distances itself from the sexuality of Dido's and Aeneas' experience in the cave, in the surrounding narrative material the diegetic text alludes to the sexual nature of the encounter by repeatedly availing itself of forms of the verb “to mingle” in Latin—directly parallel, etymologically, to the Greek verb “to mingle”—in order to describe sexual intercourse and

political and cosmic activity. Venus, in response to Juno's proposed manipulation of the event in the cave, doubts whether Jupiter "approves that the peoples of Dido and Aeneas be mixed and that treaties be joined" (4.112), employing both "to mingle" and "to join," in a political context that contains an implication of the sexual union that could cement the political (Adams 1982, 179–80). Even the weather is "mingled" before the event in the cave (4.120 and 4.160–1). Images of political and cosmic mingling surround and amplify the sexual union of Dido and Aeneas, but Jupiter's ultimate disapproval prevents them from being joined politically, as allies, or socially, as a married couple.

After the sexual encounter between Dido and Aeneas in the cave, the Virgilian text expands upon the foolishness of Dido's passion by asserting that the queen now deludes herself about the nature of her sexual relationship with Aeneas: she calls the episode a "marriage" (*coniugium*, a Latin compound and a derivative of *iungere*, "to join"), her pretence for the "crime" (*culpam* 4.172). Adams, referring specifically to this usage, pointedly comments: "The term 'marriage' dignifies a purely sexual liaison ..." (1982, 160). Rumor's later report intensifies the sexual aspect of the interaction, to the exclusion of the possibility of a proper marriage, by gossiping that Dido and Aeneas "join themselves together, captured by foul desire [*cupidine*]" (4.192–4). Rather than the joining of treaties, their union is explicitly sexualized, recalling Cupid's role in arousing Dido's passion for Aeneas, but also resembling the phrase "conquered by *erōs*" in the Homeric text. This confusing "marriage" seems to succeed only sexually, privately, and temporarily; it fails socio-culturally as a marriage and "not only disables Dido politically but leads, apparently inevitably, to her death: *ille dies primus leti primusque malorum/causa fuit* 4.169–70" (Keith 1997, 298). The manner of Dido's death only reinforces the connection of *erōs* and *thanatos*, as the queen's suicide plays out on her own bed and is effected through penetration by Aeneas' phallic sword (McManus 1997, 102; Pavlock 1990, 84). A narrative element also emerges in the distinctive stories that Dido creates for herself about the sexual encounter, which she seeks to elevate and integrate into an acceptable ritual, and the report of Rumor, which diminishes any element of social propriety by emphasizing the couple's helpless captivity to passion. The *Aeneid* reserves for itself the harshest interpretation of the sexual encounter in the cave by referring to it as a "crime" (in Latin *culpam*). As we have seen, *erōs* has differing associations with narrative in the two Homeric epics; in Virgil, however, the polysemic instability of the narratives surrounding the event in the cave reflects the instability of the event itself. This heterosexual encounter, with its ambiguous

narrative validity and differing interpretations, can never hold Aeneas, while its very insubstantiality binds Dido to death. Furthermore, as a result of this benighted sexual activity, Dido curses Aeneas and his descendants at length, outlining the bloodshed of the Punic Wars, a political expansion of the fatal hostility of the Carthaginian queen. The text's conspicuous retroactive connection of the historical reality of the Punic Wars to the sexual relationship between Dido and Aeneas binds *erōs* and *thanatos* to a defining early part of Rome's imperial progression.

The sexual encounter between Venus and Vulcan in *Aeneid* 8, according to Putnam, is the “most explicitly erotic moment in the epic” (Putnam 1995, 43). Venus seduces her husband by warming him with “a soft embrace” (8.388); Vulcan, conquered by love (8.394, as Zeus is in *Iliad* 14), responds by returning “desired embraces” (8.405), a euphemistic expression for sexual intercourse (Adams 1982, 181). The seduction encompasses not just one moment in Rome's future and past history, but her extended imperial future in the depictions on the shield, which is the product of the encounter, as befits the broader cosmic aspect of divine sex. The shield outlines Rome's often violent assimilation of other cultures and its recent vicious civil war, while the piece of armor itself ensures the initial victory of empire secured by Aeneas. This sexual encounter can be read not simply as the means of producing the shield with its ecphrasis, but in closer conjunction with the final books of the *Aeneid* and the long train of Roman history to the present time. Toward the end of the shield's representation we read about “races conquered in long succession” (8.722); Vulcan vanquished by seduction presages the long line of races vanquished by Roman imperial military power.

The narrative of the first of these vanquished races, however, is contained not on the face of the shield, which begins with the triumphs of Aeneas' son, but in *Aeneid* 12. Although the epic revises the ambiguous language of sexual joinery from the Dido episode into the language of political alliance in this final book, the prophetically revealed results of the sexual episodes in both *Aeneid* 4 and 8 severely undercut the comforting depictions of peacefully mingling populations: the sexual unions result in violent military and political confrontations, their own kind of intimate relations as we remember from Hektor in the *Iliad*. In the last book of the *Aeneid*, where Aeneas takes the final steps toward the fated political, cultural, and sexual union with the Italians, Virgil employs “to join” and “to mingle” to signal the predestined union of Trojans and Italians. As Juno succumbs to Jupiter's wishes and prerogative, she asks that, when the Trojans and Italians “join treaties” (12.822), Trojan nationality and language be subsumed to the Italian; Jupiter agrees, declaring that the

Trojans, “mixed only in body” (835), will subside, and a race “mixed with Italian blood” (838) will rise (see Gillis 1983, 40). Here again the cultural, political, and sexual are mingled. Culturally and politically, Troy will disappear; the mixing of bodies, however, evokes sexual union and thus the preservation of both Trojan and Italian ancestry. This prophecy of the originary and mythical past of the Roman Empire, immediately prior to Aeneas' brutal treatment of Turnus, is cloaked in allusion to the sexual mingling of the opposing forces; at the same time the *Aeneid* contains violent narratives of consequent assimilations through history. The *Aeneid* moves from sex as the cause of death in *Aeneid* 4 and 8 to a complex dynamic in which sex becomes the metaphor for the deadly conflict between nations or races. We are close to the Iliadic notion of warriors' battles as a form of erotic contact, but on a much less intimate and more cynical level. The *Aeneid's* concluding sexual metaphors function instead to highlight the distance of erotics from these cultural clashes and to situate the violence of the *Aeneid's* final lines, and Rome's future and past, as the savagery that it is.

The ancient Greek and Roman epics' challenge to interrogate heroism, adventure and return, and the establishment of a national identity and power among other concepts has assured their canonical literary status. The epics are rarely, however, examined for their sexual and erotic content. Nevertheless, the Homeric epics, including their wider cyclic tradition, and Virgil's Roman epic incorporate episodes of sexual activity fundamental to their narratives. *Erōs*, essential to the continuation of the mortal race, works together with *thanatos* and the imaginative power of narrative to define mortality. Or, to put it another way, the promise or hope inherent in sex and narrative signal mortality's resistance to death, even as death defines both. The associations that each epic establishes between sex and narrative suggest that ancient Greek and Roman culture did share a conceptual prism in which the biologically reproductive results of sexual activity could also be supplemented or substituted by the culturally reproductive results of narrative: recomposition in narrative parallels reproduction in body—both are forms of remembering. Even when the narrative projections into the future are dire, such as Dido's curse in *Aeneid* 4, the performative words create that future narrative. These epics' recognition of sex's and narrative's shared power against death is celebrated each time another reader of Homer or Vergil enjoys their imaginative universes.

Guide to Further Reading

As noted in the text, the Homeric epics have very few dedicated works on sex, with the exception of Hubbard's 2011 entry in *The Homer Encyclopedia* ("Sexuality") and Naerebout 1987. Calame 1999, Davidson 2007, Ormand 2009, Pavlock 1990, Sissa 2008, Staten 1995, Thornton 1997, and Zeitlin 1999 all include some discussion of Homeric sex. For the general topic of sex in ancient Greek literature, see Carson 1986 and 1990, Gilhuly 2009, Karras 2000, Loraux 1995, Vernant 1991, and Zeitlin 1999. Halperin, Winkler, and Zeitlin 1990 provides a good basis for thinking about sex in ancient Greek and Roman cultures. For sex in the *Aeneid* there is a dearth similar to that pertaining to the Homeric epics; but see, most productively, Gillis 1983, Keith 1997, and Oliensis 1997.

Notes

- 1 West, in his recent edition of the epic cycle, has interpolated this Trojan War episode, among others, into Proclus' *Chrestomathy* from Apollodorus' Hellenistic *Library*; he argues that many of these interpolated narratives reflect knowledge of a larger version of the epic cycle than we currently have at our disposal (West 2003, 13).
- 2 "[S]ex and sexual knowledge have always been inextricably bound in an embrace with death," Dollimore 1998, xi; see also Calame 1999, 36; Loraux 1995, 200; and Vermeule 1979, 159.
- 3 See also Vernant 1990, 469 for *erōs* and lack, and 1991, 102 for "[f]unereal *pothos* and erotic *pothos*."
- 4 In Ormand's 2009 book on sexuality in the Greek and Roman worlds, the *Aeneid* is not discussed at all.
- 5 See Gilhuly 2009, 8 for the "multiplicity and complexity of sexuality that the Athenians themselves recognized," and 9 for the lesser amount of attention even to Athenian heterosexuality; see Ormand 2009, 23 for the "heteroerotic" nature of Greek epics; and Hubbard 2011, 789 for Homeric sexuality's difference from later Athenian sexuality.
- 6 See Zeitlin 1999, 56 for ideology and practice; see Naerebout 1987, 112–13 for our lack of information about sexuality in the period of the Homeric epics.
- 7 Naerebout 1987 approaches this conclusion when he declares that the evidence from the epics is "*only true at the level of the system*, since we are speaking about the audience's mental universe ...

practice is not deducible from the system” (127).

8 Both Ormand 2009, 22 and Oliensis 1997, 309 view the absence of homosexual sex as “generic”; see Hubbard 2011, 790 on contemporaneous local historical practices of homosexuality.

9 See also Zeitlin 1999, 51, Gilhuly 2009, 7 and 10, and Ormand 2009, 14 on cultural construct.

10 I clarify here that I am confining my examination of sex in the epics to explicit instances of sexual activity. Scholars such as Davidson may infer a sexual component to the friendship of Achilles and Patroklos (and I may not be unwilling to entertain this notion), and other scholars may investigate Odysseus' encounter with Nausicaa as sexually charged (an idea with which I agree), but the texts do not represent sexual activity (see Ormand 2009, 26).

11 Carson comments astutely that sexual encounters that engender children are “work”; all other types of sexual activity are categorized as “play” (1990, 149–50).

12 Monsacré also appeals to these examples of the erotics of battle (1984, 64).

13 “The bloodshed of Troy has its source in sexual intrigue and betrayal” (Thornton 1997, 24). Tom Hubbard has also pointed out to me that the cause of the over-population of the earth, which instigates Zeus' ridding the earth of humans, clearly must be too much sexual activity.

14 If Achilles' claim that he loves Briseis is true (9.342), her seizure by Agamemnon might have affected his heart at least as much as her transfer to Agamemnon's possession lessened his honor and status.

15 Loraux suggests that Helen's “desire” for Menelaos is a function of the lack or absence (1995, 198 and 206).

16 The verbal repetition in these scenes may suggest that we possess a formulaic pattern common to erotic encounters (Janko 1992, 168–70).

17 See Zeitlin 1999, 65 on *Iliad* 14 and Janko, who asserts that this episode “undermines the proper order of the cosmos on all levels” (Janko 1992, 169) and plays out the “threat to the cosmic order” alluded to in the references to the difficulties between Oceanus and Tethys (Janko 1992, 180).

18 “[W]hat the reader wants from reading and what the lover wants from love are experiences of very similar design. It is a necessary triangular design, and it embodies a reach for the unknown” (Carson 1986, 109).

19 Bergren (1980, 25) interprets the narrative intrusion of *erōs* in

Iliad 14 as “poetic desire,” separate from Zeus' plan and the narrative.

20 The “warrior's fight to the death shares a hazy boundary with the attraction and sexual union of man and woman” (Vernant 1991, 97); see also Monsacré (1984, 63–4) for the parallelism or analogy between martial and erotic encounters.

21 Vernant (1991, 108) points out that for Odysseus to stay with Kalypso would mean to “renounce his career as an epic hero.”

22 For Odysseus' continuous suffering and grieving: *Odyssey* 1.49; 5.13; 5.33; 1.55; 5.83–4; 157–8; and 5.151–3.

23 Erotic desire is an “assault on the self and its boundaries” (Zeitlin 1999, 55); a “fusion or fragmentation” of that self (Zeitlin 1999, 60).

24 Kirke later alters the effects of the bad drug (10.394) with the good antidote (10.392).

25 “Virgil's epic regularly construes heterosexual desire as the enemy, never the support, of social order” (Oliensis 1997, 307).

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Chapter 20

Erotic Lyric

Richard Rawles and Bartolo Natoli

Lyric Texts and Contexts

Love shook
my mind like a wind falling on oak-trees on a mountain.

Sappho 47, trans. Miller 1996

You came, and I was yearning for you,
you plunged my heart into coolness when it flamed with
longing.

Sappho 48, trans. Miller 1996

Once again Love has beaten me like a blacksmith
with a great hammer and dipped me into a wintry torrent.

Anacreon 413, trans. Miller 1996

The erotic lyric of archaic Greece is often easy to read and enjoy; these fragments show the capacity of these songs to speak directly to modern readers through their vividness of imagery and strength of feeling. They originate, however, not as private sentiments committed to paper for future generations to share, but as songs associated with specific contexts within archaic Greek culture. Historicizing scholarship, therefore, involves attempts to recover social and performative contexts for the songs and fragments that survive; this task is deeply intertwined with interpreting the songs as fragments of ancient discourses of sexuality.

In Rome, as in Greece, erotic lyric maintained an intensely personal and emotional nature, yet it was less associated with specific contexts: instead of the aristocratic *sumposion*, Roman erotic lyric was

increasingly tied to a more mobile culture of books. Despite this shift in context, however, erotic lyric was continuously intertwined with the social situation in Rome. Roman lyric poets, a group mostly comprised of Italians fighting against political inequalities, began to use the intensely emotional poetry of erotic lyric to critique their society. Therefore one of the major thrusts of recent scholarship on Roman erotic lyric is to analyze and interpret this critique, particularly in terms of sexuality.

Sappho and Her “Circle”

Sappho's songs have barely survived; we have one complete song (Fr. 1) and four or five of which the overall structure and sense is perceptible. Otherwise everything is fragments. Their importance for scholarly and other receptions of antiquity is, however, enormous: Sappho (who flourished in Mytilene, on Lesbos, c. 600 bce) is the most powerful and prominent female voice from antiquity, and her songs are remarkable for their presentation of female homoerotic desire.

Investigation of fragments and context has sometimes been obscured by sexist and homophobic attitudes of scholars and their times, and it is problematic because of the limitations of our evidence about Sappho's society on archaic Lesbos: the procedure involves combining evidence from the fragments with (selected) testimonia and comparison with phenomena elsewhere (in ancient Greece, and, through anthropology, more broadly). The songs are most important, but their fragmentary condition makes interpretation difficult, and not all of them were composed for performance in the same circumstances. Some fragments probably or indisputably come from wedding songs (104–17 are attributed to the book of *Epithalamia*, but fragments from other books look like wedding songs too, e.g. 27, 30). Some of these were composed for initial choral performance; and there are traces of choral song elsewhere in the fragments as well. The voice created in a choral song praising the bride's beauty should not be interpreted in the same way as the voice created in a song where the narrator is identified by name as the poet (as in 1, 94), but since the genre and occasion of a fragment is often uncertain there is a danger that, in making arguments from many fragments, an interpreter may end up like somebody trying to make one picture from pieces of more than one jigsaw.

However, scholars have had some success in establishing a framework for understanding the social context against which Sappho's songs should be seen (I draw particularly on Lardinois 1994;

see also Gentili 1988, Lardinois 1996, Calame 1997, Ferrari 2010). Using different names, scholars have identified a “group” of females within which much of Sappho's poetic production should be contextualized. In the fragments, these females engage in song and dance and cultic activities, especially directed toward Aphrodite (e.g. 94, 22). Many are named (Atthis, Anactoria, Gongyla...); they are associated with beauty and grace (e.g. 16, 22, 96); their relationships with one another may be passionate and caring (especially 94, 96). The same are taken to be those described as *korai* (“girls,” 140a), *parthenoi* (“unmarried young women,” 27.10, 30.2, 56.2, 153), *paides* (“youths, children,” see especially the “new Sappho” below): they are younger than the narrator. We hear of rivals such as Andromeda, who may be the leader of another such group (e.g. 70, 131, perhaps 55; note the new reconstruction at Ferrari 2010, 20–1). Some fragments (probably 94, 96) respond to somebody's departure from the group, perhaps as a consequence of marriage. The “new Sappho” (58, much augmented by a new papyrus discovery: Greene and Skinner 2009) shows a narrator identifiable with Sappho singing to a group of younger women, perhaps while they dance (ll. 1–6, trans. M. L. West):

Pursue the violet-laden Muses' handsome gifts,
my children, and the loud-voiced lyre so dear to song:
But me—my skin which once was soft is withered now
by age, my hair has turned to white which once was black,
my heart has been weighed down, my knees give no support
which once were nimble in the dance like fawns.

This group has been variously characterized by scholars (we do not know what word Sappho's contemporaries used). For Wilamowitz, in 1913, Sappho was a schoolmistress and the young women her students, for whom she expressed chaste affection in surprisingly eroticized terms. This was for some time a popular notion: it allowed homoeroticism first to be denied, then aligned with a modern idea of the schoolgirl lesbian “crush”; and it was perhaps also attractive to scholars because it allowed the potential erotics of pedagogical situations to be explored and/or denied from a safe historical distance (most scholars are teachers and have experienced Sappho in the classroom or lecture theatre as students and lecturers). Modern scholarship generally rejects such a description as an anachronistic metaphor: nothing we would call a “school” existed on archaic Lesbos. In place of “school,” sometimes the word *thiasos* has been used (e.g. Gentili 1988). This word denotes religious associations, especially Dionysiac ones. As a reminder that the activities of Sappho's group formed part of the community's religious and cultic life, this is appropriate; but no ancient source uses the word in connection with

Sappho, and *thiasos* may segregate Sappho from broader archaic culture unnecessarily (other musico-poetic groups are not given this name).

An alternative is to call the group a *choros* (“chorus,” “group characterized by participation in song and dance”: Calame 1997). This also implies a religious and cultic dimension, and it helps us to perceive the (partial) continuity between Sappho's circle and groups of young women elsewhere in the Greek world that we call “choruses.” In particular, it allows for a partial analogy with expressions of female homoeroticism in songs for young female choruses by the Spartan poet Alcman. According to this theory, Sappho led a chorus of young women, composing their songs and training them to perform. The world of the chorus—of learning songs in a group of women temporarily separated from their fathers' houses, before marriage would move them to the world of a husband—would be the setting for relationships between women as described in (some of) Sappho's songs. The phenomenon may be interpreted as *ritual* (that is, a regularized, traditional pattern of behavior, expressive of social meaning) with an initiatory character (it marks the transition from girlhood to marriageable womanhood).

To call Sappho's group a *choros* does not imply that all the songs were composed for choral performance; some were not (nor does every song necessarily belong in this context). However, even songs where the singer is identified by the name “Sappho” may describe emotions and experiences associated with relationships within this group, and this is the probable context for the songs expressing emotional and erotic relations between women. Sappho need not be the only desiring agent in the group; the narrator (even when identifiable with Sappho) may represent normative experiences and sentiments, and some songs imply erotic feelings shared more broadly. In this context, the songs sometimes speak of female desire for men (in 16, Helen's departure for Troy illustrates the power of love), but the narrator's desire is generally directed at women (in 16, this reminds the narrator of Anactoria).

“Anthropological” descriptions can have a strong “distancing” effect. Terms like “cultic,” “ritual,” or “initiation” can feel like an attempt to deny the nature and power of the emotions expressed in the songs. However, it is necessary to emphasize the difference between homoerotic eros in this context and “lesbianism” in the modern world, because sexuality is always experienced in historically and socially inflected ways (on Sapphic eros and lesbianism, see Lardinois 1989, Skinner 1996, Winkler 1996, Snyder 1997). Importantly, it does not follow that the emotion described in the songs is *merely* ritual: there is no necessary opposition between “ritual” and

“real emotion.” Rather we should infer from the songs that relationships found in this context could be described in eroticized terms because they could be felt (at least by some) in eroticized ways.

For some young women on Lesbos (not all: we are concerned with an elite phenomenon), participation in Sappho's *choros* was a normative, socially sanctioned experience. It may therefore be dangerous to view Sapphic homoeroticism or its expression in song as a counter-cultural phenomenon involving the rejection of patriarchal values, despite persuasive literary readings that emphasize, for instance, Sappho's response to Homeric traditions as the expression of an alternative female voice. Women participated in the *choros* with their fathers' permission, prior to marriage. However, the example of Athenian tragedy reminds us that choro-poetic forms integrated into the power structures and ritual life of a community need not be restricted to the straightforward presentation of socially normative values. If there is a danger of romanticizing the capacity of Sappho's songs and Sappho's female community to provide a center of imagination free from patriarchy and heteronormative control of sexuality, there may also be a danger in underestimating the subversive capacity of song and sensuality (contrasting views in Hallett 1996, Skinner 1996, Winkler 1996, Stehle 1997, Lardinois 2011).

Sappho Outside the “Circle”

Not all of Sappho's songs were composed for performance *within* the circle. Some, including wedding songs, were for more “public” performances; often the interaction between a song and its context(s) is obscure. However, Sappho's songs outlived their initial performative contexts and became part of a broader Greek poetic heritage. They were received, performed, and imitated by different people in changed worlds. Early diffusion involved re-performance of Sappho's songs in the context of the *sumposion*, the key social institution for conviviality and homosocial community among men in the archaic and classical worlds (see essays by Boedeker and Nagy in Greene and Skinner 2009): Sappho's songs were performed by men wishing to entertain one another while drinking. Symposiasts' openness to these songs must have involved willingness to “role-play” voices whose social identities were different from their own, in a process facilitated by the capacity of eros to provoke “recognition” across social/historical boundaries. Proper names and the genders of persons in the songs did not inhibit performance or appreciation, even if new contexts may have changed

participants' sense of the “meaning” of the songs.

Thus Sappho's songs were available to later poets, and their imagery appropriated for varying purposes. In Hellenistic poetry we see a great variety of receptions. Sappho 31 (quoted in Chapter 9) was a classic: for Apollonius of Rhodes and Theocritus it could be a model for the description of female desire in a heterosexual context (Acosta-Hughes 2010). In epigram, allusions to Sappho and Sapphic tropes and imagery could be deployed in erotic contexts (cf. Catullus 51) to describe male desire. Nossis, however, an early Hellenistic female poet of epigram, began and ended a book of epigrams with poems evoking Sappho (AP 5.170, 7.718), and it has been argued that these programmatically marked a concern with developing a women's view of female experience, including erotic experience: for Nossis, the identity and “specialness” of Sappho as a voice celebrating women, and women's sexuality, was recoverable and valuable (Skinner 1989).

“Theognis” and the *sumposion*

Erotic verse by men in the archaic period is dominated by one context: the *sumposion*, or ritualized drinking party (see Chapter 12 in this volume). The *sumposion* was a venue for re-performance of songs that originated in different contexts, but other kinds of song had the *sumposion* as their regular home. Sympotic discourse could be concerned with public affairs (Solon's elegiac reflections on the political crisis of early sixth-century Athens were probably sympotic), but also with erotic subjects: Solon's elegies include a fragment that says “until one falls in love with a boy in the lovely flower of youth, desiring thighs and a sweet mouth” (25, trans. Campbell).

Such pederastic content is common in sympotic elegy (one of the most common metrical forms for archaic sympotic verse, composed in a distich structure), for which our richest source is “Theognis.” The quotation marks reflect the fact that the collection transmitted under this name is an anthology that grew around a core of material composed for sympotic performance in archaic Megara and *may* be the work of a historical Theognis (West 1974; Nagy in Figueira and Nagy 1985). Our anthology, as we have it, is divided into two books; most of the explicitly pederastic material has been gathered into the second, but this does not alter the (less explicit) pederastic character of many elegies in the first part.

This tradition is characterized by a deeply conservative narrator, who is concerned about the fate of his city, perceived as being under threat from new sources of wealth and power. The content is often

gnomic and paraenetic, and the narrator often addresses himself to Kyrnos, whom he also calls Polypaides. The narrator transmits to Kyrnos traditional wisdom; reproves him for responding with deceitful behavior to the fame given to him (237–54); and presents him with an analysis of the misfortunes of their city and society. The implicit pragmatic situation involves the presence of a younger male at a sympotic gathering; this male is addressed by his senior, who inculcates him with politically conservative values and advice. This situation should be identified with the sympotic address to a *pais* (youth) in overtly pederastic elegies, such as are gathered into the second book. The narrator of these elegies expresses his delight in boys (1255–6, 1335–6) and addresses a nameless *pais* to declare his love and desire for requital (1299–304); elsewhere he reproaches the boy for inconstancy or untrustworthiness in erotic contexts—we may note a continuity in the importance of constancy and trustworthiness in the world of the polis in this tradition (Lear 2011).

Theognis' description—a profoundly ideologically inflected account—presents a world where pederasty is an introduction of young males into the world of adulthood and the affairs of the community—an introduction involving the transmission of traditional wisdom from *erastēs* (the adult “lover”) to *erōmenos* (the pre-adult “beloved”). This is an elite phenomenon, and Theognidean wisdom and advice is concerned with preserving an aristocracy under threat. The pattern of pederasty as an induction into adult male culture is associated with a particular age-group (the Theognidean *pais*—“boy, youth”—is an *erōmenos* “for as long as your chin is smooth,” 1327, and will subsequently become an *erastēs* in his turn) and has features of initiatory ritual. The combination of pederasty with transmission of wisdom in traditional paraenetic forms is also visible in traditions concerning heroic education in a world before the *sumposion*: later poets seem to derive both pederastic and paraenetic content from the *Precepts of Cheiron*, a work attributed to Hesiod, where the centaur Cheiron instructs Achilles in traditional wisdom (Kurke 1990).

The restriction of sympotic sexuality to pederasty (including the explicit comparison of boys and women, 1367–8) within the Theognidea reflects the generic concerns of this tradition—a tradition of song and of sympotic behaviors—rather than the anachronistic concept of “orientation” (see Chapter 4 in this volume). In this respect, the characteristics of Theognidean sympotic sexuality occupy a position at one end of a spectrum that, in other traditions, allows different presentations of sympotic sexuality. Already in Mimnermus (late seventh century bce), sympotic elegy expresses the sentiments of a narrator equally interested in women and in boys (Mimnermus 1; a book of Mimnermus' elegies was called *Nanno*, after his female

beloved), and we find sympotic performance of desire for both boys and women in the verse of the most flamboyant of sympotic lovers, Anacreon.

Anacreon: Performing Sexuality in the Tyrant's *sumposion*

Anacreon was born around 570 bce, as a native of Teos, in coastal Asia Minor, but spent time at the court of the tyrant Polykrates of Samos. After Polykrates' death (c. 522), he moved to Athens to the circle of Hipparchos, younger son of the tyrant Peisistratos and brother of his successor Hippias. His fragments show some variety in subject matter—political/civic concerns are visible (348, 353, 391), and what appears to be quasi-iambic satire at the expense of the parvenu Artemon (388)—and there are also possible traces of choral song (500–1), but frequently he is a poet of the *sumposion*, and especially of sympotic love and wine (Budelmann 2009a).

His songs often concern themselves with the powerful impact of erotic passion on the narrator, and eros is described with exuberantly expressive imagery (e.g. 396, 398, 413). The object of his desire may be a youthful male (as in Theognis) or a woman. In the pederastic songs, however, there is no sign of the Theognidean presentation of pederasty as a mechanism for transmitting political and traditional wisdom. Rather the performer plays a narrator who is a creature of wine and love, motivated by desire and pleasure. More than in Theognis, his desire transforms his dominance as adult male, giving him a subjected, victim status (360, trans. Miller 1996):

O boy whose glance is girlish,
I pursue you, but you pay no heed,
not knowing that you hold my soul's
reins in your hand.

In Anacreon's songs, bisexual desire is assumed. However, women are treated differently from boys, in a way that may be consistent with a sociological explanation: some youths at the *sumposion*, although subordinate to adult males by virtue of their age, may be future adult citizens of distinguished family, whereas females are “professionals,” present as entertainers and as sex-objects for the male symposiasts. There may, however, have been greater variety than this model allows: the Thracian youth Smerdies might be a slave. Descriptions of women emphasize their status as “public women”—a pejorative

rhetoric (e.g. 346 Fr. 1.13, 347.12; Eurypyle “Wide-Gate” in 372, 389, 427, 440, 446). Where horse imagery is used in connection with a woman, it represents an assertion of the narrator's control and mastery rather than his subjection to desire (417).

Differences between sexuality in Anacreon and in the corpus of Theognis and sympotic poetry more broadly may be explained in various ways. Tyranny was inconsistent with the politics of aristocratic oligarchy that is characteristic of Theognidean pederasty, and tyrants' *sumposia* may have had a different social mix from *sumposia* elsewhere, which the themes of Anacreontic song may have suited (Kantziros 2005). Tyrants promoted an image that associated them with erotic glamor and beauty: the Peisistratids promoted the cult of the god Eros (Shapiro 1989), while Ibycus (S151) juxtaposes praise of Polykrates with eroticized myth. However, such explanations need not be the whole story: Anacreon worked within a tradition of Ionian song that is otherwise invisible, and features that appear idiosyncratic may have been characteristic of this tradition for generations.

Eros as a source of glamor, contributing to the public image of a tyrant, relates to another strand of erotic discourse in lyric, perhaps separable from the sympotic enactment of desire. Especially in fragments of Anacreon's contemporary Ibycus we see erotic expression in the context of songs whose rhetoric was one of praise: here, as where Sappho's *choros* sings of the beauty of a bride, we see admiration for beauty as a public discourse of praise rather than as a discourse represented as description of an individual's erotic sentiment (Rawles 2011).

Archaic Eros in Later Worlds

Just as Sappho's songs, these poets' works entered a canon and resonated through many centuries of later Greek (and Roman) poetry. Anacreon became an icon for hedonism in old age, associated with love and wine. “Anacreon” as a persona became a template for literary compositions dating from the Hellenistic period into the Roman era and beyond: a collection of these “Anacreontea” survives (Rosenmeyer 1992). Sometimes the poets imagine scenes of Anacreon's fictional “biography” (in 15, he sends a pigeon with a message for Bathyllos, whose name occurs in the genuine fragments); in other poems the content is Anacreontic only in its emphasis on wine and beauty. Women and boys may be love objects, but poems concerning the love of women seem more prominent than in Anacreon's own work, and

these women are no longer the professionals of archaic *sumposia*.

In Hellenistic epigram Anacreon was an icon for the combination of wine and eros and a source of imagery for poets interested in explorations of desire and eroticism. The ball game of Anacreon 358 is transformed by Meleager (first century bce) into a more overtly psychological metaphor (Meleager 53 G–P = *AP* 5.214). Dioscorides, active in Egypt in the late third century bce (Gow and Page 1965, 235), composed many erotic epigrams, and also a sequence of epigrams on poets of the past. His epigram for Anacreon (19 G–P = *AP* 7.31) takes figures and ideas from the fragments but changes their context and transforms Anacreontic desire into a fantasy of hedonistic wish-fulfillment: after his desire for the male youth Smerdies in life, Dioscorides prays that in death Anacreon will be supplied with endless wine and luxurious flowers and will dance with “golden Eurypyle” (for these examples, Acosta-Hughes 2010, 152–3). Here we encounter a phenomenon that may color our own experience of archaic eros from written texts: the eros of situations and performances is transformed into an erotics of the text, and, as readers, we ourselves, like Dioscorides, may close the gap of desire and achieve its fulfillment through fantasy.

Performing Sexuality in Rome

As mentioned at the outset of this chapter, erotic lyric in Rome provides us a glimpse into how sexuality was constructed in the first century bce and how poets used it as a tool to engage more broadly in the political and socio-cultural discourse of the late republic and early principate. This chapter's discussion of Roman erotic lyric will thus explore the methods by which authors engaged in such discourse and will consider the basic, over-arching issues regarding sexuality: (1) how and why male poets engaged the dominant sexual discourse in terms of activity/passivity; and (2) why and how they subverted such discursive roles to achieve literary and political gains.

Even more than archaic Greece, republican Rome featured a dominant conception of sexuality with normative roles based not on opposite genders, as in modern western society, but on activity/passivity. True men (*viri*) were thought to be impenetrable penetrators, and their sexual desires were not limited to women, but included all individuals of lesser social status,² such as boys (*pueri*, *adulscntes*), slaves (*servi*), freedmen (*homines*) and women (*mulieres*, *puellae*) (see Walters 1997, 29–43). Women, on the other hand, were marked as inherently passive and able to be penetrated in any hole

(see Lucretius 1268–77; Martial 10.68.10; Plu. *Con. praec.* 140c–d). Individuals who deviated from these sexual norms were described in a derogatory fashion. Men who preferred to play the passive role, or allowed themselves to do so, were termed *cinaedi* or *pathici*.³ Women who actively sought out control of a sexual encounter were described as unnaturally aggressive.⁴ Parker (1997, 50) summed this up by simply stating: “The sexually active woman is a monster.” This “normative” conception of sexuality along an axis of activity/passivity was supported by a structuralist scheme of vocabulary denoting various sexual acts of activity and passivity (Parker 1997, 48–9; Adams 1990; Butrica 2005).

Such “normative” sexuality provides a constant backdrop for Roman lyric poetry, particularly that of Catullus and the canonical elegists. In this section we shall examine selective manners in which poets engage with this sexuality. First we shall look at this “normative” sexuality at work in a poem of Catullus, to show that this sexuality was at work in Roman lyric. Then we shall take up a discussion of how such sexuality was used by lyric poets to comment on the socio-political situation of the last half of the first century bce. In particular, we shall turn to discussions of power relations between elite males and to depictions of the patron–client relationship between a poet and his benefactor.

One of the most popular places to start discussions of sexuality in antiquity is Catullus 16, a scathing invective by the poet against Aurelius and Furius:

I shall butt-fuck you and mouth-fuck you, submissive [*pathice*]
Aurelius and pansy [*cinaede*] Furius, you who thought that I wasn't
virtuous enough from my verselets, because they are soft little
things [*molliculi*]. For it is right for the reverent poet himself to be
wholesome, not necessarily so for his verselets, which then, in the
end, have wit and charm, if they are soft little things and not
virtuous enough, and are able to rouse that which excites; I'm not
talking about boys, but about these shaggy ones who are not able to
move their hard loins. You, because you have read about many
thousands of kisses, think me less of a man? I shall butt-fuck you
and mouth-fuck you.

In this poem Catullus answers charges of softness (*mollitia*) leveled against him by his friends. The basis of their claims is Catullus' passive stance in the relationship he portrays in his poetry, as he pines for a beloved instead of actively taking the object of his sexual desire. Catullus seeks to recuperate his masculine status by simultaneously taking a hyper-virile stance and questioning the masculinity of his accusers. Whereas Catullus describes himself as one who will exercise

his dominance over his peers by penetrating them, Aurelius and Furius are depicted as passive in two regards: (1) the description of each one of them as a *pathicus* and *cinaedus*, which indicates that they desire to be penetrated and are, consequently, not true *vir*i like Catullus; and (2) their impotency, as they are not able to “move their hard loins” (i.e., to “get it up”).

The results of Catullus' sexual invective provide insight into the socio-political and literary realms of the late republic, as Catullus uses sexuality to perform masculinity in the same fashion as men performed their virility in the Senate, courts, or battlefields. Following the tradition of performance theory in Catullan scholarship (e.g., Newman 1990, Fitzgerald 1995, Krostenko 2001), Wray (2001) has applied it to the realm of masculinity, arguing that Catullus performs masculinity in his poems; he links such “free exchange of spoken and written invective” to other known fora for performing masculinity, such as the rostra and the battlefield (58–9). Consequently, one of the key manners in which sexuality is viewed in Roman lyric is through the prism of how poets perform masculinity in response to the socio-political climate of their times. Two more examples will suffice to further this point.

In Poem 28 Catullus returns to the theme of masculinity; but, instead of taking a hyper-virile stance, he complains that the masculinity of Roman *vir*i has been trampled by the overweening power of the generals Memmius and Piso. He bemoans the subordinate roles that he and two of his friends, Veranius and Fabullus, have had to endure, describing the situation in sexual terms:

Compatriots of Piso, empty-handed cohort, with little knapsacks ready and unencumbered, best Veranus and you my Fabullus, what do you make of things? Isn't it enough that you bear hunger and cold with that worthless sot? Indeed in the accounts does small net gain show up, as I reckon what was given to me, who followed my praetor? O Memmius, well and for a long time you slowly mouth-fucked me, as I laid back, with that entire ship's mast of yours. But, as far as I can tell, you were in the same boat: for you were stuffed with no less a hard-on. Seek noble friends! Yet, may the gods and goddesses give many evil things to you, disgraces of Romulus and Remus.

The unfair economic situation of Catullus' campaign in Bithynia is described in sexual terms. Catullus states that he, like his friends, has been force-fed (*irrumasti* = to mouth fuck) the ship's mast of his commander, Memmius. Memmius' economic injustice toward Catullus, a *vir*, is a transgression of a social boundary tantamount to Memmius' claim to power over Catullus, a power that Catullus transfers from the

economic to the sexual sphere. Tatum (2011, 344ff.) explains that Catullus' dealings with Memmius were symptomatic of the exploitation of provincial Italians like Catullus by the Romans (see Poems 29 and 57). Yet Catullus doesn't absolve himself from blame either, as he describes his exploitation as easy and long-lasting, an act that "causes the language of [sexual] aggression to teeter over into the language of pleasure" (Fitzgerald 1995, 66; Nappa 2001, 95–6).

Like the Catullan examples, the poetry of Horace provides yet another use of sexuality to describe socio-political realities. In Ode 2.17, Horace uses sexuality to portray the good patron–client relationship that he had enjoyed with Maecenas. Although the patron–client relationship was always an unequal one, Horace describes his in terms of equality and symmetry, both Horace and Maecenas playing the active and the passive role. He opens the ode as a response to Maecenas' complaints: "Why do you exhaust me with your complaints [*querelae*]?" (Hor. *Carm.* 2.17.1). *Querela* was the specific term used to indicate the complaint of an active lover about his beloved in elegiac poetry. In this beginning, therefore, Horace depicts his relationship with Maecenas in sexual terms, with Maecenas as the active lover and Horace as the passive beloved (see *Carm.* 2.9.17–18, 2.13.24, 3.11.52, 3.27.66). Yet Horace goes on to make complaints of his own throughout the rest of the poem, breaking the traditional silence of the passive elegiac beloved (Oliensis 1997, 167). Now Horace is the active, complaining lover and Maecenas the passive, silent beloved.

This symmetrical relationship is furthered in the second stanza, as Horace evokes a Callimachean epigram (AP 12.73) to depict their death as shared and symmetrical:

A! If a premature force takes you, a part of my soul, why should I, the other half [*altera*], delay, neither as dear nor as remaining whole? That day shall lead the destruction of us both. (Hor. *Carm.* 2.17.5–9).

Moreover, both men are not only equated as equal halves, but placed in a passive position: Horace as the feminine *altera*, Maecenas as the direct object that Death takes away (Oliensis 1997, 167–8).

Yet, no matter how much Horace wishes this relationship were equal, he returns from his fantasy to a reality in which Maecenas is superior, ending the third stanza with a more masculine metaphor: "We will go, we will go, wherever you lead forth, companions prepared to snatch the last journey" (*Carm.* 2.17.10–12). Here the correct boundaries of the patron–client relationship are redrawn, with Maecenas in the lead. Yet, unlike in the sexual aggression inflicted by Memmius onto Catullus, here Horace and Maecenas remain companions, sharing equally in the journey through the constant use

of plural verbs (e.g., *we will go*). Moreover, the overtly passive stance of both men in the second stanza is balanced by a masculine one here, one in which they snatch from Death (the “last journey”) that which it had inflicted upon them earlier.

The entire Horatian ode is one of balance created in an effort to describe an equal relationship between a patron and a client, cast in sexual vocabulary. This is strikingly different from the relationship portrayed in Catullus' Poem 28, yet it retains the medium of sexuality. Both poems show the changing sexual and social roles common throughout Roman lyric. What can be said about them goes for Roman lyric more generally: in the late republic and principate sexual roles were in turmoil, as was the socio-political world. Lyric poetry recognized this and attempted to renegotiate the changing world in those terms.

Inverting Sexuality

Another means by which sexuality was employed to comment on the socio-political situation in Rome was the inversion of normative gender roles. Although this motif can be found in the poetry of Catullus (e.g. Poem 28), the group of poets who more fully embraced it—Propertius, Tibullus, and Ovid—were the elegists. Like Catullus, these men (with the exception of Ovid) were provincial elites who had seen their opportunities for obtaining public office and performing masculinity in public fora diminish with the fall of the republic. Their frustration with their situation led them to write poetry in which each of their poetic personae takes on a less masculine role. This not only served to describe their frustrating reality, but also embraced the destabilization of the system of gender roles that had created that reality.

To describe such a destabilization of reality, the elegists created entire tropes and situations that placed their masculine personae in a more passive role and their feminine beloveds in a more active one. Whereas Catullus had earlier changed gender dynamics and had granted equal status to his beloved Lesbia, Propertius and Tibullus granted complete control to their beloveds Cynthia and Delia. This shift in control is clearly seen in the adoption of “mistress” (*domina*) to describe the beloved, and “the servitude of love” (*servitium amoris*) to describe the poet's state.

From the beginning of Propertius' *Monobiblos*, his servitude is made clear: “Cynthia first captured me, miserable, with her eyes, me touched before by no desires” (Prop. 1.1). These lines feature sexually

charged vocabulary that places the male lover in a position subservient to the female beloved, as Cynthia is described as taking Propertius, capturing him with her eyes. The emphasis on Cynthia's eyes increases the sexual dimension, as eyes were frequently seen to be the seat of sexuality (Bartsch 2006). Propertius' servitude is again mentioned at the end of the poem, as he states that "perhaps he would suffer the sword and savage fires, as long as the [masculine] freedom to speak what he wanted in anger remained" (Prop. 1.27–8). Yet Propertius is only able to exert such freedom when he is deep in a forest and separated from Cynthia (1.18).

Like Propertius, who goes on to speak of his servitude elsewhere (e.g. 1.9, 1.10), Tibullus also depicts himself as a slave to his beloved Delia. However, whereas Propertius' servitude was limited to an emotional one, Tibullus extends it to physical humiliation. Tibullus 1.5.5–6 stands as a good example: "Brand me, a wild beast, and rack me, lest it please me to speak anything grandiose again: tame my harsh words." Tibullus, like Propertius, welcomes his servitude, but Tibullus alone seeks to have even his free speech curtailed by his beloved. Moreover, Tibullus lowers himself to the status of a beast and asks to be branded as a runaway slave, a deserter from his *servitium amoris*, to be penetrated with steel for his indiscretion. In a society that held the bodies of men to be inviolable, such physical disfigurement marked a shift to a passive role.

In contrast with such passive depictions of masculine lovers, the female beloveds took on more masculine, aggressive roles. Catullus describes Lesbia's intense sexual appetite, which only 300 men can sate (Cat. 11). Likewise, Cynthia and Delia are portrayed as active sexual agents who are able to choose whom they sleep with (Prop. 1.15; Tib. 1.5). Moreover, Cynthia also plays the role of a heroically masculine serpent who tests the passive Propertius (Prop. 4.8; see Walin 2009).

Yet one must be careful not to paint a picture of the elegists in overly large strokes. As we saw earlier with Catullus, poetry by the same author can oscillate between passive and active stances. More recently, Greene (2000) has pointed out that Propertius and Tibullus did not adhere to their servitude in every instance, as they also described their actions through mythological allusions that were strongly aggressive and portrayed them in a highly masculine manner. Moreover, although the female beloveds of the elegists are often represented in an active, masculine manner, they are even more often placed in the typically passive feminine role (Hallett 1992, 109ff.). The poetry of Sulpicia, who is the only possible female elegist whose poetry is extant, stands as the quintessential testament to this fluidity. Throughout her short corpus she casts herself as the active lover and

the passive beloved: although she takes on nearly all the traits of the typical passive beloved, she herself is the active agent who writes to her lover Cerinthus, whose name, derived from the term for wax or honey, evokes a malleable, passive persona (Roessel 1990). Yet such fluid movement from a passive to an active role of the poetic persona perhaps comes to its zenith in the poetry of Ovid.

Ovid is perhaps the Roman poet whose lyric poetry is most often associated with sexuality. His massive literary corpus includes a number of amatory and erotic works, and even those without an outward interest in the erotic feature segments that deal with amatory and sexual themes. Throughout his lyric poetry, Ovid maintains many of the same tropes exhibited by his elegiac predecessors. However, although Ovid engages in these same motifs, he does so in a cheeky, more nuanced manner. Sharrock (2002, 95) sums it up beautifully:

More than any other non-dramatic ancient poetry, male-authored as it overwhelmingly is, Ovid's work gives space to a female voice, in however problematic a manner, and to both male and female voices which reflect explicitly on their own gendered identity. It is also driven by a troubled relationship with the purveyors of Roman masculinity—the army, politics, Augustus, epic, and so on. Moreover, the poet—par excellence—of the fluidity of identity clearly provokes a gendered reading.

The presence of such a fluid and unstable rendering of sexuality can be seen from the opening of the *Amores* (1.1–4; 25–8):

Arms and violent wars in a harsh meter I was preparing to bear forth, with material appropriate to the beat. Equal was the uneven verse—Cupid is said to have laughed and to have snatched one foot ... Miserable me! That boy has sure arrows! I burn, and in my empty heart Love reigns. In six feet my work begins, in five it ends: farewell iron war with your beat!

Here Ovid, the male lover, qua *vir*, should be the penetrator, but he is moved into a passive role. Although he attempts to play the role of *vir* that his opening allusion to *Aeneid* 1.1 invokes, Ovid himself is penetrated by the arrows of Cupid. The shift from the activity of martial epic to the passivity of elegy marks this change.

Yet later, at *Amores* 1.7.35–40, the more masculine Ovid who aimed to speak of “arms and violent wars” can be found again:

Go now, victor, celebrate magnificent triumph, wreath your hair with laurel and give back offerings to Jove, and let whatever crowd follows your chariot shout: “Io! The girl has been conquered by a brave man!” Let the captive one go before, sad with undone hair, all white, if her beaten cheek should allow it.

Here, in a mock triumphant strain, Ovid celebrates the beating he gave his beloved, domestic violence that casts Ovid in a traditionally masculine role. The same Ovid who was penetrated earlier is now penetrator; the inverted sexuality of elegy has been replaced by a more normative stance.

Beyond the use of similar motifs, the reason for the fluidity and relative insecurity of Ovid's depictions of sexuality also closely resembles that of the other lyric poets we have examined. Indeed, in many ways, Ovid is responding to the social dynamics of his times. Unlike the poetry of Catullus, Propertius, Tibullus, and Horace, which had the civil wars for its backdrop, Ovid's poetry responds, in large part, to the Augustan social experiment. The slippage of his male persona from active to passive to active again has been read as a way of destabilizing the Augustan emphasis on marriage and procreation (Sharrock 2002, 105). For example, the adulterous and risqué content of the *Ars amatoria* need not necessarily mean that Ovid condoned adultery (cf. Ovid's arguments against his exile in *Tristia* 2). It does, however, provide an explicitly clear alternative to Augustan social control.

What we are left with at the end of this examination, then, is a clear and consistent line that runs throughout all of the poetry we have examined: lyric poets used sexuality as a tool to comment upon the socio-political questions of their day. Some chose to present traditional gender roles, some chose to invert the entire schema, and still others presented an unstable type of sexuality, which fluctuated between the two extremes. Although their means were different, Roman lyric poets wrote their poetry as a problematizing response to everything about traditional society, including its sexuality.

Guide to Further Reading

Budelmann 2009b is a good introduction to Greek lyric. On Sappho, Greene 1996a and 1996b are useful collections of criticism. On Theognis, see in particular the essays gathered in Figueira and Nagy 1985. For the contrast between Theognis and Anacreon, see Lear 2008. Acosta-Hughes 2010 discusses archaic lyric in Hellenistic poetry.

The scholarship on sexuality in Roman lyric poetry is immense. Five works, however, stand out as places to begin research: Gleason 1995, later essays in Foxhall and Salmon 1998, Williams 1999, the collection of essays by Hallett and Skinner 1997, and Edwards 1993. In addition, James 2003 and Wyke 1994 are essential as feminist

criticism on sexuality in Roman elegy. More recently, the 2012 *Blackwell Companion to Roman Love Elegy*, edited by Gold, provides a tremendous overview. For Catullus, the most essential works include Skinner 1993 and Wray 2001. There is less scholarship regarding sexuality in Horace than in any other of the Roman lyric authors, but the major accounts of Horatian sexual mores can be found in Richlin 1992. The most up-to-date discussion for sexuality—and, indeed, for all things—in Propertius is the German commentary of Syndikus 2010. For Ovid, Richlin 1992, Murgatroyd 2000, and Kennedy 1993.

Notes

1 The sections on Greek poetry were written by Richard Rawles; the sections on Roman poetry that follow them by Bartolo Natoli; and the opening section was authored jointly.

2 Richlin 1992 defines the normal *vir* as one who conforms to her Priapic model. Taking pleasure in penetrating, he will penetrate anyone, male or female, in any hole. Cf. also Veyne 1985, 29 and Parker 1997, 54–5.

3 The terms *pathicus* and *cinaedus* are highly controversial. In rough terms, a *cinaedus* is defined as a male who actively seeks to be penetrated by another man. A *pathicus*, on the other hand, is indifferent to the sex of the individual who uses him, delighting in being passive not only to men through penetration, but also to women, by providing his tongue for cunnilingus or his penis for use as a dildo. Cf. Parker 1997, especially pp. 56–8, and Butrica 2005.

4 Mart. 11.104, 7.18; Ov. *Am.* 1.10.36, 2.10.35; Tib. 1.9. Yet, somewhat paradoxically, women were required to be active in their sexual relations with men, particularly as partners who actively pleased the man: Mart. 7.91; 10.35, 38. For more, see Adams 1982, 164; Parker 1997, 55–6; Parker 1992; Hallett 1992; Richlin 1992.

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Chapter 21

Sexuality in the Extant Greek and Roman Tragedies

Hanna M. Roisman

Introduction

This chapter discusses the treatment of sex in the extant Greek tragedies and in Seneca's plays using the same myths. With the possible exception of Euripides' *Bacchae*, sex figures in the plays under discussion largely because some sexual act or desire features in the myths they dramatize. As in those myths, the sex in these plays was extreme, illicit, or aberrant, and never casual. According to Skinner (2005, 112–47), the fifth-century Athenians were concerned with the disruptive potential of strong sexual passion because of the danger it posed to the continuity of the *oikos*, the household, which formed the basis of their polity.

The tragedies deal variously with forbidden liaisons or desires and uncontrollable passions: with violent courtship, incest, and adultery; sexual jealousy, rejection, and betrayal; and their destructive consequences. In the tragedies as a whole, one can detect a tension between a rather conservative attitude, manifested in the apparently agreed-upon value placed on the virginity of unmarried girls and the chastity of married women, and the notion of *erōs* as an all-powerful force over which the individual has little if any control. However, the tragedies' focus on extremes, along with the very small number of classical Greek tragedies that survive and the fact that each of the extant Greek tragedians dealt with different sexual matters, each in his own unique way, makes the tragedies a very partial, unreliable source of knowledge about ancient Greek attitudes toward sexuality.¹

Thus this chapter will deal with the tragedies not as sources of

information, but as literary works. It will look at the way the sexual issues in the myths were treated in the context of the plays' plots, characterizations, and themes. It will start with a discussion of the four playwrights' treatments of the sexual issues inherent in the myth of the House of Atreus, dramatized in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, Sophocles' and Euripides' *Electra*, and Seneca's *Agamemnon*. It will then go on to discuss each of the four playwrights' other relevant tragedies.

Plays Focusing on the House of Atreus

The myth of the House of Atreus contains several sexual components: the illicit relationship between Klytaimnestra and Aigisthos, Agamemnon's introduction of Cassandra as a concubine, and Elektra's unmarried state. Each of the tragedians deals differently with these subjects, in accord with the more central concerns of his plays.

In Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, sexual contents are subordinate to the question of woman's obligations as mother and wife: in *Agamemnon*, Klytaimnestra is presented both as a mother driven to avenge the sacrifice of her daughter and as a treacherous wife who brutally murders her husband. Of the three Greek tragedians, Aeschylus is the only one who clearly attributes Klytaimnestra's murder of Agamemnon to his sacrifice of Iphigenia and downplays the possibility that her real motive was either jealousy of Cassandra or illicit passion for Aigisthos. The chorus recounts the sacrifice at length and in detail (Ag. 184–251). Agamemnon's bringing home Cassandra, who Klytaimnestra will later say shares Agamemnon's bed and to whom she will coarsely refer as a “mast rubber” (ll. 1441–3),² adds insult to injury; but Cassandra appears on stage (l. 783) well after Klytaimnestra has already determined to kill her husband, and nowhere is it indicated that she knew about the relationship beforehand. Aigisthos is described by Klytaimnestra as a powerful protector who will shield her (ll. 1435–7), not as her lover, while he himself explains that he took part in the murder so as to regain the throne that Agamemnon's father had stolen from his. Despite the chorus' accusation that he had waited out the war while “defiling the master's bed” (ll. 1626–7), the play faults him more as an incipient tyrant than as a man of amorous bent. Klytaimnestra is faulted not primarily for her sexual misconduct, but for deviously hiding her murderous intentions behind the façade of a loving wife (ll. 587–612, 615–16, 795–8, 807–9, 1227–38).

For all the play's apparent justification of her revenge,

Klytaimnestra is nevertheless faulted for killing her husband. The murder is framed as masculine behavior inappropriate for a woman. Cassandra censures the “daring” of a woman being “the slayer of a man” (ll. 1231–2). Klytaimnestra's detailed, unrepentant, even triumphant account of the bloody murder and Agamemnon's agonized death (ll. 1372–92) as she gloats over his and Cassandra's corpses has the flavor of Homer's battle descriptions. Depicting herself as a kind of warrior woman who inflicted on her husband a punishment he well deserved, she also shows herself to have acted in a manner unbefitting her gender and obligations as a wife (Zeitlin 1996, 89–98). These descriptions give Klytaimnestra a far more active role in Agamemnon's death than she has in Homer, where, for all that she is drawn as an adulterous and treacherous wife, the murder itself is attributed to Aigisthos and her own part limited to that of accomplice (*Od.* 3. 234–5, 265–72; 4.90–2; 11.409–10).

The *Libation Bearers* gives Klytaimnestra's and Aigisthos' sexual alliance more space than it had in *Agamemnon*. The chorus asks Zeus to restore the fortunes of the house, so that “those who rightly wish good order/may see it here” (ll. 785–7). Orestes, after killing Aigisthos and his mother, notes that they “are lovers still” (l. 976) and that Aigisthos received his lawful “adulterer's punishment” (l. 990). But their liaison is presented as only one justification for Orestes' revenge killing, along with their wasting of his property (ll. 973–4) and his mother's treacherous plotting (ll. 991–6).

The *Eumenides*, in which Orestes' punishment is debated before the court of the Areopagus, returns to the issue of whether women's primary obligations are to their children or their husbands. In addressing this question, the play shows Klytaimnestra as a grieving mother and makes no mention of either her affair with Aigisthos or any jealousy of Cassandra. While Apollo claims that only the male determines children's genetic qualities and, supported by Athena, argues for the supremacy of married love and the obligations that go with it over maternal feelings and duties (ll. 213–24, 657–66), the play itself is ambivalent. The jurors' vote on Orestes' punishment is a tie—which means that Orestes is allowed to go free, but does not resolve the matter of principle.

The two *Electra* plays, like Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers*, dramatize the children's vengeance for their father's murder. Both, however, place more emphasis on Klytaimnestra's illicit liaison than Aeschylus' plays do, and both address Elektra's anomalous unwed status, which Aeschylus had not addressed at all. Sophocles casts his Elektra as a spinster; Euripides marries his off to a poor farmer, who refrains from taking her virginity.

Sophocles' play treats both Klytaimnestra's illicit sexual liaison and

Elektra's unwed state in a way that supports the necessity of the revenge. Both the chorus and Elektra harp on Klytaimnestra's sexual misconduct. The chorus calls Eros "the murderer" (197) and declares that "an unlawful, unwedded craving for a blood-defiled marriage came upon those who have no right to marry" (ll. 492–4). Elektra, addressing the chorus, calls Aigisthos' usurpation of her father's bed "the ultimate outrage" (*teleutaian hubrin*, l. 271) and asks rhetorically whether Klytaimnestra, "who sleeps with him" can be called "a mother" (ll. 272–4). In the *agōn* with her mother, she argues that Iphigenia's sacrifice may have been the pretext (l. 584), not the reason, for the murder. She demands that Klytaimnestra explain why she is "sleeping with this man with blood on his hands ...whose children you now bear, while your first, legitimate ones, born of legitimate wedlock, you cast out" (ll. 587–90). She also tells her that she does not consider her a mother because of the misery that she and her "partner" (*sunnomos*) inflicted on her (ll. 597–600). In these statements, Klytaimnestra's liaison is presented as a contributing motive for her murder of Agamemnon, the cause of her mistreatment of her children, and evidence that she is not a true mother.

Elektra's unwed state is framed as a social problem. A modern audience familiar with Jung's "Electra complex" and psychoanalytic notions of displacement might regard Elektra's repeated references to her mother's sexuality as a product of her own sexual frustration, and her inconsolable mourning for her father and intense longing for her absent brother as deflections of thwarted libido. However, Elektra, like the play as a whole, is concerned not with the sexual deprivation attendant on a woman's being unmarried in ancient Greece, but with the social deprivations of being single: not having children, the protection of a man, or a place in society (ll. 187–92). The purpose of Elektra's repeated references to her mother's illicit sexual relationship, reinforced by those of the chorus, is to convince the audience that Klytaimnestra's and Aigisthos' rule is an evil that cannot be permitted to continue and that vengeance is required. Elektra's being prevented from marrying and her ensuing deprivations are further evidence of her mistreatment by the ruling couple and yet another reason that their rule must cease.

In Euripides' *Electra*, which treats the revenge as the exchange of one evil for another (1147) and as a mistake stemming from Apollo's misleading oracle (ll. 1245–6), Klytaimnestra's sexual misconduct is not quite the moral evil it is in Sophocles' play. Elektra describes her mother as an unchaste woman who would go from one man's bed to another (ll. 921–4), and accuses her of primping and preening to attract other men even before Iphigenia was sacrificed (ll. 1069–71). But the chorus does not second her criticisms with its own; and the

only other character to fault Klytaimnestra for her liaison is the Old Man, who calls her a “godless woman” whom everyone hates (l. 645). His is not an authoritative voice, however, and Klytaimnestra will soon argue rather convincingly that people's condemnation of her is hypocritical.

Nor does Klytaimnestra's sexual misconduct make her a bad mother in Euripides' play. Elektra tells Orestes that “women love their husbands, not their children” (l. 265); and Klytaimnestra frankly admits that her main motive in killing Agamemnon was not motherly pain at his slaying their daughter but her sexual jealousy when he “introduced [her = Cassandra] to our bed” (l. 1033). This motive, apparently reflecting a stereotypic notion of feminine jealousy, is horrifying in its shallowness and triviality. Nonetheless, the play shows Klytaimnestra as a mother who saved her children from Aigisthos' murderous intentions (l. 28) and who meets her death through her motherly consent to perform a ritual for her daughter's (supposed) newborn son.

Euripides uses both the ruling couple's sexual misconduct and Elektra's unconsummated marriage for social criticism. Unlike Sophocles, he gives attention not only to Klytaimnestra's infidelity, but also to Aigisthos' philandering, to which Elektra draws attention (ll. 945–8). Having established a kind of parity between the peccadilloes of men and women, he has Klytaimnestra define her sexual motives as natural to women and women's infidelities as imitations of their husbands'; from there, she goes on to criticize society's double standard:

Women are for sure a thing of folly, deny it I do not.
And since this is so, whenever a husband goes astray
having rejected the bed of his house, the wife wants
to imitate her husband and acquire another friend.
But then the censure puts us in the spotlight;
the guilty ones, the men, are never blamed at all.

(Eur. *El.* 1035–40)

With respect to Elektra's unconsummated marriage, Euripides shows no more interest than Sophocles in her sexual frustration or, for that matter, in the Farmer's. His focus is rather on the moral and social implications of the Farmer's restraint. Morally, his restraint shows him to be a man of integrity and superior quality, the *aristos* (l. 382) that Orestes calls him. Socially, the contrast with the sexual license of the upper classes challenges claims that morality is inherent in class and illustrates the immorality of the ruling couple.

Seneca's *Agamemnon*, like Aeschylus', deals with the king's murder.

It is more focused, however, than either Aeschylus' play or the two *Electra* on Clytemnestra's illicit affair and its implications. At the beginning of the play, Clytemnestra briefly vents her bitterness at Agamemnon both for his sacrifice of Iphigenia (162–74) and for his multiple infidelities (Chryseis, Briseis, Cassandra). Essentially, though, Seneca draws Clytemnestra as an unfaithful wife who actually loves her husband, but whose infidelity leads her to murder him (ll. 175–91, 239, 253–9, 1001–3) and, worse, to try to murder her children. We see her at the start of the play torn between her happiness that Agamemnon is finally returning from the Trojan War and her fear of what he will do should he discover her betrayal. This is the dilemma caused by her infidelity. Initially, she rejects Aegisthus' argument that the only way to ensure her safety is to kill Agamemnon, but succumbs to his prodding when she sees that Agamemnon has brought home Cassandra. This awakens her jealousy and also intensifies her fear that he will punish her. While she had previously argued, citing the example of Menelaus, that many husbands forgive their errant wives, she now accepts Aegisthus' contention that this is so only when the husband doesn't have a new love, as Agamemnon does. By the end of the play, she is a wicked woman and even worse than her predecessors. Not only has she brutally murdered her husband; she actively joins Aegisthus in looking for Orestes so they can kill him, too, and urges Aegisthus to kill Electra. In short, the entire plot shows how sexual infidelity inexorably leads to evil.

The above discussion highlights the uniqueness of each tragedian's treatment of the sexual aspects of the same myth. The remainder of the chapter examines the treatment of sexuality by each of the tragedians separately. Not surprisingly, their treatment of the sexual content of the myths they dramatized in other plays is consistent with their treatment of the sexual subject matter in the plays concerning the House of Atreus.

Aeschylus

Aside from the *Oresteia*, the *Suppliants* is the only extant play by Aeschylus in which sexual issues are integral to the core myth. Probably the first (possibly the second) play of a trilogy produced between 470 and 459, it dramatizes the story of Danaos' 50 daughters, who flee with their father to Argos to escape marriage to their cousins, the sons of Aegyptus, and are granted refuge by the democratic vote of the citizens. Of the other two plays of the trilogy nothing remains but a fragment of a speech attributed to Aphrodite.³ It is known from

other sources, however, that the girls' succor is temporary, that they are forced to marry their hated cousins, and that all but one of them, who feels a desirous love for her husband, kill their unwanted spouses.

As far as is discernible from the extant text, a major issue in the trilogy is the proper foundation for marriage. *Suppliants* (and apparently the trilogy as a whole) rejects marriage attained by force and presents love not only as a woman's right in marriage, but as an essential element of it. The suppliant maidens, speaking as the chorus, beg Zeus, Artemis, and Pelasgos, the king of Argos, to save them from the beds of these men (37–9, 141–2, 151–2) and a hateful marriage (*gamos dusphrōn*, 394; cf. 1062–4), and tell him that they fled their home disgusted with the marriage bed (ll. 331–2). With a sound sense of what they do not want in marriage, they ask him to save them from becoming household-slaves to Aigyptos' sons (ll. 335, 337) and vow never to be “subject to men” (ll. 392–3). They prefer death to this marriage (ll. 788–9, 804–5).

The girls' position is inconsistent with the value the *Oresteia* places on the woman's obligations as a wife and would probably have been viewed as extreme by a contemporary audience. Nor does the play clearly state their or their father's motives for so strongly opposing the marriage.⁴ It allows that the opposition may stem from the fact that the suitors are the girls' cousins, but none of the characters actually says this, and cousin marriage was not unusual in fifth-century Athens.⁵ It places more emphasis on the violence of the Egyptian suitors, who pursue the fleeing girls to Argos. The suitors are repeatedly described as predatory animals. Danaos compares them to hawks threatening doves (ll. 223–4) and the girls compare them to wolves, ravens, and dogs (ll. 351, 751, 758).⁶

Whatever their motives, the fact that the girls do not want the suitors, that they fear and loathe them, turns the suitors' aggressive pursuit into an act that defiles and pollutes whatever they come in contact with, even the girls themselves. The suitor-hawks “pollute” the altar sites where they threaten the innocent doves (ll. 223–4); the suitor-ravens do not respect altars (ll. 751–2). Danaos asks the local gods how a man can marry an unwilling daughter of an unwilling father and remain pure (ll. 227–8). The notion that unwilling matrimony is unacceptable is reinforced by the fact that the maidens' pleas and the father's arguments are accepted by all the citizens of Argos, who vote unanimously to grant them asylum and provide them with protection even at the price of war with Egypt (ll. 342, 439–40, 449, 474–7, 605–24, 739–47, 934–7, 950–1). This idea is also reinforced by presenting the suitors' rapacious sexuality and willingness to use force as rape. Pelasgos promises he will never expose the girls to “the rape of birds” (l. 510). The maidens fear the

suitors' "hands" and touch (ll. 755–6, 790–1) and "male *hubris*" (ll. 426, 528, 816–17; cf. 105–6, 487).

The idea seems to be that the sexual act in a loveless marriage is a type of rape and that wives are more than household drudges. The role of sexuality in marriage is indicated in the surviving fragment from a speech by Aphrodite in the third play (Fr. 44). The speech presents Eros as a vital element in marriage and as a procreative force essential to the fertility of man and nature, as well as free of the violence that characterizes the pursuers.

As the sacred heaven longs to pierce the earth,
So love takes hold of earth to join in marriage,
And showers, fallen from heavens brought to bed,
Make the earth pregnant; and she in turn gives birth
To flocks of sheep and Ceres' nourishment—
A marriage that drenches the springtime of the woods—
For all this I am in part responsible.

(Trans. S. Benardete)

As far as we can tell, the trilogy distinguishes between *erōs* and the violence with which it is often associated, and supports the need for mutual consent in marriage.

Sophocles

Of Sophocles' seven extant tragedies, the only one other than *Electra* that is based on a myth in which sexuality has an important place is *Oedipus the King*. Even more than the Elektra myth, the myth of Oedipus' murder of his father and marriage to his mother has given rise to a highly influential psychological construct in the thinking of the last century—the Oedipus complex. Yet in *Oedipus the King*, as in the plays concerning the House of Atreus, the myth's sexual concerns are muted and secondary to its main theme.

While the plot of the play charts Oedipus' discovery of his identity and double crime of parricide and incest, Sophocles uses the myth to treat the subject of self-knowledge. Oedipus, the wise man who solved the riddle of the Sphinx, does not know who he is. His parricide and ensuing marriage to his mother, which would never have occurred if he had known, bring home how little we know of ourselves. His self-blinding and Iokaste's suicide at the end of his arduous self-discovery show that while the lack of self-knowledge leads to disaster, its acquisition brings only misery.

With the possible exception of Iokaste's brief mitigating statement that "many have shared their bed [*xunēunasthēsan*] with their mothers in dreams" (981–2), the subject of incest, though often referred to, is not developed. We meet Oedipus when he is already married to Iokaste. Virtually the only point that is made about the incest is that it is an abomination: the source of the pestilence that afflicts the city (ll. 96–8, 350–3, 362, 449–62), a pollutant (ll. 358, 820–3), and an act so terrible that it cannot and must not be named (l. 1289).

As was traditional in ancient Greek epic and lyric poetry and as befitted the dignity of tragedy, the sexual relationship is referred to circumspectly, through verbs denoting shaking or mixing (*mignumi*, ll. 791, 995), lying with, sharing a bed (*xuneunaō*, l. 982), joining or yoking (*zeugnumi*, l. 826), and being together or in company with (*homileō*, *xuneimi*, ll. 366–7, 457). Sophocles also refers to the relationship through two metaphors conventionally associated with the sexual act: coming into a harbor or haven (*limēn*, ll. 1207–13) and sowing or plowing a field (*homosporos*, l. 460, *alokes*, l. 1211–13). These images highlight the idea that incest perverts the nature of things. Under ordinary circumstances, the image of the harbor conveys the sense of the sexual act as a homecoming to refuge, comfort, and respite, while agricultural imagery links the act of human procreation to the fertility of the land. But when the harbor is the mother's body, it is essentially "inhospitable" (*anormon*), as Teiresias points out (l. 423); and the only thing that comes of sowing and plowing the mother's body (or father's bed) is the blight that afflicts the city's crops and animals and makes its women infertile.

Repeated in multiple ways, the idea that incest is an abomination pervades the play and lends to Oedipus' self-discovery and blinding much of the terror that Aristotle attributes to tragedy. It does not, however, add information that the audience does not have or bring the playwright's unique perspective to bear on the situation. The playwright's and audience's agreement that incest is an abomination obviates any need to explore its dynamic or examine its taboo.

Thus, when the secret is revealed, Oedipus expresses his revulsion by repeatedly referring to his anomalous double roles. He terms himself "the bridegroom of the one by whom he was begotten" (ll. 1358–9) and "kin to those from whom I have sprung", l. 1361). Addressing his parents' marriage, he says that "having given me birth/you have again sent up the same seed, and displayed/fathers who were brothers, children of kindred blood (*haim' emphulion*), brides who were both wives and mothers" (ll. 1403–7). He bids his children come to one who "unknowingly became your father from where I myself was sown" (l. 1485) and "planted his seed in the one who gave birth to him, from whom he himself has sprung, and begot you from the

same source he himself was begotten” (1497–9). Earlier, the chorus (1214–15), the Second Messenger (l. 1250), and Iokaste (ll. 1257–8) had similarly hammered on the double role, which is the most basic meaning of mother–son incest. By repeating it in multiple variations, Sophocles conveys the characters' horror at the act and creates a strong emotional impact on the audience, without adding anything to the contemplation of incest that is not universally known.

This avoidance, it should be emphasized, is not a shortcoming of the play. It reflects Sophocles' greater interest in the issue of knowledge, and perhaps also the sense, which can be seen in *Electra* as well, that sex in itself is not all that central to the lives of good and decent people.

Euripides

Of the three tragedians, Euripides is the one who elaborates the most fully on the sexual dimensions of the myths he dramatizes and deals most openly with his characters' sexuality. *Medea* (431 bce) and *Hippolytus* (428 bce), produced in close succession, both feature women whose erotic passion wreaks havoc, first on their own emotions and then on other people, especially (but not only) on the men who disappoint them. *Medea* is drawn, in keeping with the myth, as a woman whose passionate love led her to engineer heinous murders, to make her home with her lover in a foreign land, and then to exact a terrible revenge when he jilts her. At the start of the play she is described as suffering the symptoms of disappointed love (*Med.* 20–48): loss of appetite, all-consuming suffering, incessant crying, catatonic immobility, lack of interest in her surroundings and her children, and suicidal despair, which gives way to murderous rage at the husband who jilted her and those who took him from her. In *Hippolytus*, Phaidra, pining for her husband's chaste and misogynistic son, is described as sick, restless, miserable (176–85), and as starving herself to death (ll. 275, 277). She comes on stage saying she is too weak to get up from her sedan by herself, to hold her head up on her own, to bear the weight of her headdress, and expressing a variety of wishes—to drink from spring waters, lie in a tufted meadow, hunt in the mountains, tame horses on sandy planes—which point to the force of her sexual desire and which both the Nurse (l. 232) and she (l. 241) recognize as madness. In the play's prologue Aphrodite, the embodiment of erotic love, announces that she is the prime mover of the action and that Phaidra, whose heart she has filled with irresistible love (*erōti deinōi*, l. 28), is the helpless victim of her machinations. She

defines this passion as “the goads of love” (l. 39) and as a disease (l. 40), which will lead to Phaidra's death.

Yet for all the power these plays attribute to erotic love and for all the attention they pay to the suffering and violence stemming from its frustration, this is not their central concern. Both plays actually dramatize a double tragedy: of a man who, missing some vital spark, does not give love its due and suffers the consequences; and of a woman who, having once loved him, is the instrument of his destruction. In both plays, the hero is shown rejecting erotic love for socially respectable but dubious values: Iason for social advancement, Hippolytos for pre-marital sexual abstinence.⁷ Both characters are faulted for their choices and shown to think about sex far more than they acknowledge.

In *Medea* the practical-minded Iason, who abandons his foreign-born wife so as to improve his social and financial position by marrying the king's daughter, is portrayed not only as singularly lacking in passion, whether for Medea or his bride-to-be, but as a cad possessed of an extraordinary emotional and moral obtuseness. Priding himself on his reason and logic—traits that the Greeks associated with the masculine—he boasts that his move is clever, wise, and beneficial not only to himself, but also to Medea and their children (548–50). Like the Nurse (ll. 6–8) and the chorus (ll. 431–5), he attributes the many sacrifices she has made for him to the inescapable power of *erōs* (ll. 527, 530), as other writers do (e.g., Pind. *Pyth.* 4.213–19; cf. Hes. *Th.* 992–4; Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 3). However, his attribution is reductive. As the audience sees Medea in despair, Iason simplistically reduces her grief and sense of betrayal to mere sexual jealousy and frustration. He generalizes that “as long as all is well in bed (*orthoumenēs eunēs*) you [women] are fully satisfied” (569–70; cf. 286); he believes that what bothers Medea most about his upcoming marriage is her suspicion that he disliked her “bed” (l. 555), that if she were not upset by matters related to the “bed,” she would appreciate the shrewdness of his political marriage (ll. 566–8, cf. 593–7), and that even her killing of their children was motivated by her loss of pleasure in bed (ll. 1337–8). While his claims may reflect contemporary beliefs about women's sexuality, they also portray him as a man who thinks a great deal about sex.

Hippolytos, devotee of the virgin goddess Artemis, is described and describes himself using sexually suggestive words and images. Aphrodite and Hippolytos both use the verb *xuneimi*, which connoted sexual intercourse ever since Homer, to say that he “consorts” with the virgin goddess (17, 85). Hippolytos, laying a woven or entwined wreath (*plekton stephanon*, l. 73) on Artemis' altar, says that he brings her the flowers from an “inviolable” meadow (*akēraton ...leimōn*),

where only those who are imbued with deeply rooted chastity/restraint (*sōphronein*, l. 80)—as he counts himself to be—have the privilege of entering.⁸ However, in the Greek lyric repertoire, lush meadows were places where lovers met,⁹ and woven garlands were gifts that lovers gave one another (e.g., Sappho, Fr. 94 L-P), suggesting, according to Goff (1990, 62–3), the lovers' interlocked embrace. As early as the archaic poetry of the seventh and sixth centuries, images of flowers and picking flowers were used to refer to taking sexual pleasure (Mimnermus Fr. 1.4 W; cf. Fr. 5.2 W). The spring bee, to which Hippolytos implicitly compares himself as the only being in their respective species allowed in the meadow (77), was associated with fertilization and procreation (Roisman 1999, 30–3). Moreover, although Hippolytos' recoil from the Nurse's suggestion of a sexual liaison with Phaidra is certainly in order given its illicit nature, his long misogynistic rant (616–68) after he learns of Phaidra's inappropriate desire reveals that he is lacking in the temperance—*sōphrosunē*—on which he so prides himself. His death, as he is thrown from his chariot and entangled in the reins of his rampaging horses, can be seen as an image of the destruction wrought when powerful sexual urges are denied or overly constrained.

Thus both plays counterpoint the deficient sexuality of their men with the excessive passion of their women, and reject both as destructive and life-denying, without offering a middle ground. And yet, careful reading of the plays reveals that neither heroine's catastrophic revenge is motivated primarily by sexual disappointment. In both cases, the motive is inappropriate concern with a misconceived notion of honor.

Medea complains not about Iason's leaving her bed, but about his lack of common decency: his ingratitude after she saved his life and left all she had for him (476–82), his breaking the vow of fidelity he gave when he supplicated her (ll. 492–8), and his reneging on his obligations to her as his wife who bore him sons (ll. 490–1). These complaints, supported by the chorus (ll. 204–12, 431–45, 649–62), highlight Iason's moral failings and are part of the play's social criticism. They also help to explain Medea's deep sense of having been dishonored—publicly shamed—by Iason's conduct (ll. 235–7). This initially admirable concern with honor, however, is shown to be misplaced when Medea contemplates killing their children as her ultimate revenge. One of her considerations is that she does not want to be laughed at for allowing her enemies to go unharmed (ll. 1049–50). Her murder of her children is thus shown as the outcome of her inappropriate adherence to an outmoded heroic ethic, in which public face is more important than the lives of innocent children.

In *Hippolytus*, the Nurse (359–61, 438, 443–6), the chorus (ll. 364–

5, 525–42, 563–4), and Phaidra herself (ll. 392–3, 400–2, 725–7) all recognize Phaidra's infatuation as calamitous and refer to *erōs* as a destructive force. But Phaidra's suicide and deceitful accusation that Hippolytos had raped her were only partly the outcome of her frustrated desire. Central to the concept of love as a sickness, as it is repeatedly called in the play,¹⁰ is the notion that the person afflicted with it will die if it is not fulfilled or requited. This is the assumption behind the Nurse's blunt and morally obtuse advice to the pining Phaidra: “It's not fine words you/need, but the man” (ll. 490–1). However, Phaidra does not contemplate suicide because she fears that Hippolytos will reject her illicit advances, but because she cannot bear the shame, the public disgrace, that actualizing them will bring her: “For this will bring my death, my friends, that I may never be found bringing shame on my husband and my children” (ll. 419–21, cf. 403–5). The avoidance of disgrace is a key motive in her suicide and slander of Hippolytos. Apprehensive that Hippolytos will disclose her secret despite his promise not to, she anticipates being “dishonored” (ll. 687–8, 692, 706–7). Her suicide and slander, she hints to the chorus, will enable her to pass on to her children a “life of good repute” (*euklea ...bion*, 717, cf. 422–3). The criticism here is of the hypocrisy engendered by the ideal of female sexual fidelity.

The Bacchae (405 bce), too, features a hero who fails to appreciate the value of *erōs* while actually being absorbed by it. The play, a celebration of Dionysos, dramatizes the story of Pentheus, the young and dour ruler of Thebes who rejects the god and, in punishment, is torn apart by his own mother in a fit of madness. The respected seer Teiresias' authoritatively asserts that “a pure woman will not lose her chastity” (314–18) in the worship of Dionysos. The Messenger reports the entirely asexual activities of Dionysos' female worshippers. Nonetheless, Pentheus is convinced that Dionysos' devotees are really devotees of Aphrodite who have snuck off to the mountains to serve the beds of men (ll. 222–5); that Dionysos lured them with “the charms of Aphrodite” (l. 236) and “befouls their marriage beds” (ll. 354–5). Sexuality in this play is the main expression of Dionysos' life force, and Pentheus' rejection of it an expression of his rejection of a vital element of life.¹¹

Seneca

The remainder of the chapter discusses Seneca's *Oedipus*, *Medea*, and *Phaedra*, radical reworkings of the three Greek tragedies discussed above. Of their many differences from their Greek counterparts,¹² the

one most relevant to our topic is that all three of Seneca's plays explicitly and repeatedly define their protagonist's sexual transgression as a crime (*scelus*, *crimen*). This designation is absent from the Greek tragedies, where the sexual transgression is simply treated as a fact, a "disease" (*nosos*), or as *atē*, which can be understood both as an infatuation and a madness. Seneca's criminalization of the sexual transgressions reflects a fascination with the darker side of human nature, while introducing a censorious dimension to his plays. In doing so, he also distances the (presumably non-criminal) audience from the characters and reduces the compassion and empathy evoked by the erring Greek protagonists.

Seneca's *Oedipus*, like Sophocles', treats incest as a source of deep shame and self-loathing for its perpetrators and as a perversion of the natural order. Unlike Sophocles' play, however, Seneca's refers to incest not only by circumlocution, but also by name (645, 1026), and consistently treats it together with Oedipus' parricide (which is secondary in Sophocles' play) as a single criminal act. The ghost of Laius thus reveals Oedipus' incestuous union with his mother along with his parricide (ll. 626–46) and describes it as part of the same "entanglement of evil" (*implicitum malum*, l. 640). Oedipus, in his contemplations prior to his self-blinding (ll. 938–41), similarly talks of his incest and parricide in the same breath. He is equally horrified by both, craves punishment for both, and blinds himself for both (ll. 879, 935–6).

In both the Greek and Roman plays, the incest is the outcome of destiny or fate, over which the perpetrators have no control. Seneca's criminalization of the incest jars with his emphasis on fate. His chorus tells the protagonists, "By fate are we driven; yield to fate" (*Fatis agimur; cedite fatis*, l. 980), and Iocasta, echoing their assertion, attempts to mitigate the gravity of the incest by telling Oedipus: "This is fate's fault; no one becomes guilty because of fate" (*Fati sita culpa est; nemo fit fato nocens*, l. 1019), although she immediately refers to her actions as *scelera* (l. 1024). Since a crime is a violation of a law for which the wrongdoer bears responsibility, however, Seneca's emphasis on fate makes one wonder whether his Oedipus and Iocasta were not too harsh on themselves and whether the right thing for them to have done would not have been to accept their fate and live with their sins. Seneca avoids taking this question very far by framing the protagonists' self-inflicted punishment as the revenge of Laius' ghost, who had vowed to destroy Oedipus' "incestuous house" (l. 645).

Seneca's *Medea* turns the myth into a tale of an inherently evil, aggressive, and dangerous woman who is driven by her passion—her *furor*, as the play terms it—and of a good man, who, having made the mistake of marrying a wild foreigner, is the undeserved victim of her

rage. Iason is described by the chorus as “rescued from the marriage chamber of barbarous Phasis” (ll. 102) and as having had no choice but to break his troth to Medea and marry Creon's daughter (ll. 668–9, cf. 431–43). The play thus deprives his Medea of the moral high ground of her Euripidean predecessor. In addition, instead of showing her as suffering the conventional pains of rejected love, Seneca depicts her, less sympathetically, as motivated by rage and madness. “Perplexed, crazed, with demented mind I am tossed in all directions” (ll. 123–4), his Medea proclaims. The Nurse tells: “She runs to and fro with savage movement displaying signs of distracted madness in her face” (ll. 385–6). The play is much more concerned with Medea's criminal violence than with any love she might have felt, and attributes the rage and madness that drive her violence less to Iason's rejection of her than to her unwillingness or inability to control her passions. This is the implication of the chorus' proclamation that nothing is worse than “when a wife, robbed of her love, burns hot with hate” (ll. 581–2) and of their generalization that Medea, “spurred by rage, cares not to be controlled, nor brook the bridle ...” (ll. 591–2). It is the thrust of their criticism, and the play's, that “Medea does not know how to curb anger or love” (ll. 866–7).¹³

In his *Phaedra*, too, Seneca portrays a wickedly enamored woman victimizing a man who tries to be virtuous, and who rightly rejects her. Accordingly, Seneca emphasizes the incestuous element in Phaedra's desire for Hippolytus, which Euripides had placed in the background, and treats her desire not as an irresistible divine force but as a human aberration. The goddess of Love, who had moved the action in Euripides' version, does not appear in Seneca's rendition.

Unlike his Medea, however, Seneca depicts his Phaedra not as inherently evil, but as an ordinary woman whose immoral love for her husband's son turns her into a criminal as she pursues it. Indeed, Seneca mitigates Phaedra's treachery by having the Nurse accuse Hippolytus of rape before Phaedra herself does and by framing Phaedra's suicide as atonement for this treacherous act. A central issue in the play is how an ordinary woman becomes a criminal. Thus, Seneca (unlike Euripides) gives his Phaedra understandable motives for her illicit desire, drawing her as attracted by Hippolytus' youthful beauty after having been left alone by her philandering husband, whose increasing age has diminished his allure (91–8, 620, 646–62).

Much of the first act is taken up with a debate between Phaedra and the Nurse about the power of passion. Phaedra believes that her ancestry destines her to sinful desires (ll. 111–13), insists that her passion forces her to follow her desire (ll. 177–80), and argues that passion is stronger than reason (ll. 184–5). The Nurse, a proponent of free will and the possibility of self-control, holds that “monstrous love

you can impute to fate, but crime to character” (l. 144) and urges her to “resist and expel love” (ll. 132–3), “suppress” its “fires” (l. 165), and “control” her impulses (l. 255). Eventually, the Nurse recognizes that Phaedra cannot control her desire, and the chorus comes down on Phaedra's side of the debate, declaring that “Love claims all nature, nothing is exempt” (ll. 352–3). However, although the play depicts Phaedra as enflamed (ll. 131, 173, 361) and maddened (e.g. ll. 178, 184, 248, 268, 361) by her desire, it does not really support the view that passion is irresistible. The examples the chorus gives of love's power are all from the natural world, not from the human one. The Nurse's observation that lust is more common among the wealthy than among the poor (ll. 204–17) implies that were Phaedra less spoilt by a life of luxury, she would have been able to control her desire.

The above discussion in no way covers all the issues related to sexuality that appear in the works of the four tragedians. Perhaps the most glaring omission is the image of the “good wife” found, for example, in Euripides' *Alcestis* and *Helen*. What the discussion shows is considerable variety in the sexual matters that are dealt with and in the way they are treated. Whereas Aeschylus' and Sophocles' plays deal with sexual issues apart from passionate love, Euripides' plays deal frankly with *erōs*—treated in the *Medea* and *Hippolytus* as an overwhelming, compulsive desire for a particular individual. Seneca's *Oedipus*, like Sophocles' eponymous play, deals with incest; his *Medea* and *Phaedra*, like Euripides' plays on the same myths, deal with *erōs*' destructive force. But Seneca is both more censorious than his Greek counterparts, and more interested in the psychology of how his women came to err as they did.

Guide to Further Reading

There is no shortage of excellent scholarly discussion of ancient sexuality within its social context. Greek and Roman tragedies are often mined for information on the subject. When the focus is on the tragedies as literature rather than as a source of information, sexuality is usually discussed in connection with the broader issues of which it is a part. For a discussion of ancient views of sexuality, including gender and sexual orientation, as related to social values and attitudes, see Golden and Toohey 2003 and Skinner 2005. For a brief discussion of the treatment of sexuality in Greek tragedy, see Toohey and McClure 2013.

Notes

- 1 See also discussion of the topic by P. Toohey and J. McClure 2013.
- 2 For the obscene meaning, see Koniaris 1980; Tyrrell 1980. For a less unpleasant meaning, see Neitzel 1984.
- 3 *TGF* vol. 3, Fr. 44 Radt (= Radt 1985). For discussion of the trilogy and the *Suppliants'* place in it, see Sommerstein 2008, 277–89.
- 4 Aeschylus does not mention the quarrel between Danaos and his brother, the suitors' father, which might explain his objections, nor the oracle that said that Danaos would be killed by one of his sons-in-law. For the various views regarding the psychological reason for the Danaids' rejection of the marriage—their obsessive fixation on their father, their abnormal wish to preserve their virginity, etc.—see discussion and bibliography in Papadopoulou 2011, 57–8.
- 5 For the view explaining the maidens' reluctance to marry their cousins on the basis of incest (possibly inferred from ll. 8 and 223–6), see the discussion and bibliography in Papadopoulou 2011, 58–62.
- 6 According to MacKinnon (1978), who points out the comparisons to predators, the objection is not to endogamy, but to the violence of the suitors, which is all the more abhorrent because they are family and should protect the girls.
- 7 My claim in *Nothing Is as It Seems* (Roisman 1999) 18 and *passim*, that Hippolytus rejected only pre-marital sexual activity still stands, but is not relevant to the point here. The play clearly shows the harm done when the value the society placed on male sexual restraint (Dover 2003, 120–1) is taken to unrealistic extremes.
- 8 For the sexual connotations of this inviolate meadow, see Segal 1965, 121–2.
- 9 A fragment of Archilochus (published by Merkelbach and West in 1974), which describes a man who desires a girl picking flowers in a meadow, provides evidence that the association between sexuality and the meadow landscape predated Euripides. See Bremmer 1975.
- 10 By Aphrodite (l. 40), the chorus (ll. 131, 269, 283), the Nurse (ll. 176, 179, 186, 205, 279, 293, 294, 463, 477, 479, 512, 766), Phaidra (ll. 394, 405, 597, 730), and Artemis (l. 1306).
- 11 For discussion of sexuality in the *Bacchae*, and possible repressed homosexual attraction of Pentheus to Dionysos, see Poole 1990, 118–20.
- 12 For thoughts about the comparison of Seneca's drama to that of

his Greek predecessors, see, for example, Motto and Clark, *Senecan Tragedy* 1988, 21–95; Hadas 1939; Garton 1959.

13 For discussion of the figures of Medea and Phaidra, see Roisman 2005.

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Chapter 22

The Body Politic

Monica Florence

The Perception of Ancient Sexuality

The Athenians at the Lenaia festival witnessed a sacred and sexually charged act. At the performance of the comedy the *Acharnians*, they saw the comic hero, his young daughter, and his slaves parade on the stage with a large model penis on a pole (ll. 243–60). Undoubtedly, the spectators recognized this scene for what it was: a funny and ritual reenactment of the Rural Dionysia, a common festival in honor of the god Dionysos (Parke 1977, 102; Habash 1995). Given that they were already years into a war with their Peloponnesian neighbors, the audience members likely viewed the comically recreated ritual as a powerful gesture of peace and prosperity. They would have seen nothing remarkable in the rich combination of the public, comic, sacred, and sexual. Spectators who attended the city's Dionysia festivals would likewise have been familiar with this sort of ritual, since a phallic procession preceded the theatrical performances (Cole 1993; Csapo 1997; Hedreen 2004).

From a modern perspective, it is odd that the articulation of male sex functioned as a sacred symbol at these state theatrical festivals. Yet Aristotle asserts that comedy itself originated from “the ones leading the phallic song and dance” (*Poetics* 1449^a2–14; Rothwell 2006; Rusten 2006; Rusten, 2011). Around 200 bce, Semus of Delos may also have noted the connection. According to Athenaeus, Semus describes *ithuphalloi* acting drunk and wearing long robes, carrying a phallus on a pole into the orchestra of the theater to announce the god Dionysos (Ath. 622b–d). Over two thousand years later, the phallic

parades still demonstrate to us the interconnectedness of ancient comedy, civic unity, religion, and sexuality.

In this chapter I will examine the cultural attitudes and public expression of sexuality in both comedy and mime, from approximately the last quarter of the fifth century to the mid-second century bce. Past interpretations of the evidence from this period have brought into brilliant focus the agonistic and sexually charged binarism between a masculine figure and its feminized subordinates. These readings have prioritized the performance of active and passive sexual roles and have laid bare the central mechanism in this power relationship. But should this deterministic model of ancient sexuality consistently hold true for the playful and creative worlds of ancient comedy and mime? Could a different set of questions uncover alternative sexual discourses and, to borrow a phrase from Butler, illuminate other ways of “doing gender” and sexuality (Butler 2004, 1)? Throughout this chapter I hold that comedy and mime reveal complicated gender relationships and that the construction of sexuality in these genres is, in fact, complex and multivalent. As recent scholarship has demonstrated, theories of gender as performative and socially unstable can thus add additional insight into understanding these creative and transgressive genres.

Defining Sexuality and Gender, Modern and Ancient

It is an American commonplace to represent sexual behavior, along with religion, as the private expression of an individual with liberty. This language of sexual privatization is clearly reflected in Justice Anthony Kennedy's recent opinion that the Supreme Court majority should strike down the Texas sodomy statute, since there existed “no legitimate state interest which can justify its intrusion into the personal and private life of the individual,” and in Clarence Thomas' dissent, which acknowledges that the statute is “uncommonly silly” (Lawrence v. Texas 2003). As social critics Jakobsen and Pellegrini have argued, however, our modern emphasis on sexual privacy creates a problematic social hierarchy, since any sexual behavior perceived as radically different can be politely dismissed from public discourse and thereby marginalized (Jakobsen and Pellegrini 2004, 45–50).

An example of this emphasis on sexual privacy, can be found in most modern comedies, which tend to treat sex quite gingerly. In fact the best place to uncover dominant American cultural attitudes

toward sexuality may be not comedy at all but the horror genre, where sexuality can be safely explored through metaphor. The television series *True Blood*, for example, explores the issue of sexual privacy—for vampires. On this popular show, one character clearly reveals the problematic hierarchy implicit in the heteronormative notion of “tolerance” of private differences when he informs a public leader: “I can tell you're a man of virtues and I applaud the effort you're making against the poor and disenfranchised. Especially the vampires and the gays” (*True Blood*, Season 1, Episode 2). This essentialist and exclusionary “us and them” view of sexuality reflects an important aspect of American culture. Indeed the attitude that sexuality is private and that the policing of sexual morality (within regulated norms) is the purview of private organizations and churches springs from a different tradition and leads to a different way of framing popular discourses about sexuality. In our culture, legitimate sexual expression is private, not funny.

In contrast, ancient comedies and mimes focus attention on the sexual behaviors of public leaders, as well as on those of groups such as women, slaves, and foreigners. Of course, these genres make equally polarizing claims, but the claims reflect different central concerns. For example, in the *Clouds* of Aristophanes, the comic hero Strepsiades feminizes the name of the public figure Philoxenos. One's first impulse might be to compare this joke to a seemingly analogous instance on *The Daily Show*, where the political comedian Jon Stewart described ex-president William Jefferson Clinton as “Mr. Hillary Rodham Clinton” (*The Daily Show*, September 7, 2012). A different fifth-century comic poet, Phrynichus, characterizes Philoxenos, however, as a *pornos*, male prostitute; so the modern joke and the ancient joke clearly hinge upon different sets of social circumstances, specific to each public figure (Phryn. Fr. 47 PCG). Both jokes have complicated social contexts. Both indicate that gender is a social construct based on performed behavior, a concept distinct from the biological categories of sex. The ancient joke, however, more explicitly mixes sex and politics, since it calls into question Philoxenos' elite social standing and citizenship status. Ancient sexual humor, then, relies on understanding a particular constellation of religious, social, and political circumstances, and the humor is rarely analogous to the more gently sexualized humor expressed in modern television comedies. For us, public acts of sexuality are typically found in horror films and pornography, not in comedy.

Our attitude makes some aspects of ancient sexuality seem comparatively more open: while ancient phallic processions functioned as powerful sacred and civic symbols, in our own time a 30-foot model phallus in honor of Aristophanes was banned by staff at

the 2000 Edinburgh Festival in Scotland. We also have substantially less ancient evidence for the association of particular sexual acts with a single and essential sexual orientation—a silence from which it has been possible to argue that sexuality itself is a modern concept (Winkler 1990; Halperin 1990). More likely, the multi-layered sexual humor in comedy and mime points to a similarly complex, albeit different, formulation of sexuality—one based on an equally complicated but different nexus of gender, ethnic, and class stereotypes and on different cultural understandings of acts such as prostitution, marriage, adultery, castration, and rape.

In framing sexuality, then, we know that Greek and Roman comedy and mime more explicitly connected sexual behavior to public identity and social status. Old Comedy could even eroticize a citizen's relationship to imperial power. In the *Knights* of Aristophanes, for example—a play performed in 424 bce—an Athenian citizen named Demos (“The People”) encounters some Peace Treaties and, in typical comic fashion, immediately wonders if he can have sex with them: “By gods! Can I shove in my big pole three times?” (Ar. *Eq.* 1390–1; Monoson 1994; Wohl 2002, 105–23). This opportunistic attitude toward sex remains a comic convention today, but the aggressive mix of sex and politics is different and serves as a reminder of the importance of integrating ancient sexuality into the larger context of ancient Greek and Roman gender, politics, and cultures. Deny this cultural perspective and you run the risk of oversimplifying complicated ancient genres and of seeing sexuality as too similar to the modern experience. As John Henderson once noted, “we *construct* familiar Romans” (Henderson 1999, xii). What if, then, our interpretation of the sources has been excessively grounded in our own view that public sexuality is pornographic and thus constitutes evidence of inappropriate male aggression? If we are to challenge our own complex of assumptions about sexuality in ancient Greece and Rome, comedy and mime are rich fields of study. Indeed, these popular and irreverent genres reveal what the literary theorist Sedgwick has called “the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or can't be made) to signify monolithically” (Sedgwick 1994, 8). Comedy and mime show the prevalence of masculine domination, yet they also offer glimpses into cultural constructions of gender and sexuality that were far more complex.

Twentieth-Century Scholarship and the Legacy of Dover

There have been two traditional ways of looking at the evidence on ancient sexuality. While recent theorists have focused on the margins, earlier scholars looked to the dominant power dynamic of active and passive sexual roles. So in the late twentieth century Foucault broke new ground when he argued that the definition of sexuality itself had undergone a transformation in western thought. If Foucault's influential analysis is correct, we now have "a new stylistics of existence" (1990, 71) very different from that of ancient times, when

Sexual relations—always conceived in terms of the model act of penetration, assuming a polarity that opposed activity and passivity—were seen as being of the same type as the relationship between a superior and a subordinate, an individual who dominates and one who is dominated, one who commands, and one who complies, one who vanquishes and one who is vanquished. (Foucault 1990, 215)

A scene like the one above, from Aristophanes' *Knights*, clearly reveals this type of relationship. Through sexual imagery, the scene shows a desire for a conceptual shift away from war and aggression, to a time of peace and male sensual pleasure. Additionally, the unusual word choice ("shove in the pole three times") and the representation of the Peace Treaties as passive erotic objects is good evidence for the agonistic model of sexuality first suggested by Dover (1978) and developed by Foucault in the eighties.

In fact the groundbreaking studies by Dover and Foucault greatly influenced subsequent interpretations of ancient sexuality in popular performances such as comedy and mime. As a result, many classicists signed off on the idea that ancient sexuality, socially constructed, is based on an aggressive actor and a passive object of attention. This neatly woven idea is, however, only one bright thread in a much larger pattern. In ancient comedy and mime gender categories are rarely static and normative sexual attitudes are frequently challenged on stage. We might see these humorous instances as Bakhtinian inversions, yet they also demonstrate the flexibility of gender roles during the complex interplay on stage. Of course, male authors and actors represent both men and women, but the comic decision to joke about feminine or masculine modes of behavior is in itself revealing and makes clear that, as Butler has argued, "gender is an act, which has been much rehearsed" (Butler 1990, 2). When polarization occurs in ancient comedy and mime (as it often does), it must be understood within a larger social framework.

Of course, it is easy to find examples in comedy and mime, as in other available sources, of men behaving in a dominant and aggressive way, which reinforces a hierarchy of the masculine sexual dominator and of his effeminate and passive object. So in Aristophanes' *Clouds* Right Argument notes that, if a husband catches another man with his wife, he will anally rape him with a radish, an act that flips the actively promiscuous adulterer into a sexually passive role (Ar. *Nu.* 1083). In Plautus' *Truculentus*, after the male citizen Diniarchus reveals that he has raped his former fiancée, a handmaid is chastised for not guarding the young woman better. The handmaid responds: "The one who is stronger conquers. He was a man; he was stronger. He conquered, and he took away what he wanted" (Plaut. *Truc.* 812–13). Popular performances clearly reflect a societal structure in which the interests of a small elite body of citizen men are dominant.

Yet another way of looking at these types of examples is through the work of Halperin, who built on Dover's and Foucault's hierarchical model of domination and submission. As Halperin argued:

Sex was phallic action, at least in the eyes of Athenian men: it revolved around who had the phallus, was defined by what was done with the phallus, and was polarized by the distribution of phallic pleasure. Sexual pleasures other than phallic pleasures did not count in articulating sexual roles or sexual categories: caresses and other gestures that did not fit the penetration model also did not figure in evaluating or classifying sexual behavior. (Halperin 1990, 102; see also Keuls 1985; Winkler 1990)

Halperin's analysis is supported by a plethora of literary evidence. Yet his radical reading of Foucault, and his emphasis on sex as power, is also problematic—not least because it equates a literary discourse of sexuality with its perception by a unified audience of Athenian citizen men.

As the readings of these scholars of the late twentieth century demonstrate, the comic theater is indeed a site where citizen men validate their masculinity and assert their superiority over others. Many of the sexual jokes are quick one-liners that rely on understanding the subordinate status of women, slaves, and lower classes in comparison to the status of the citizen-male. The jokes would not be funny to an audience that did not see truth in these misogynistic, ethnic, or elitist slurs. More recent scholarship, however, offers a deeper understanding of gender as a dynamic act and of sexual humor as multivalent.

Current Scholarship on Ancient Sexuality: A New Perspective

During the last fifteen years, scholars have increasingly drawn on feminist and queer theories to reframe discussions of ancient sexuality and to consider from different angles Greek and Roman sexual desires, habits, attitudes, as well as evidence of normalizing and transgressive social practices. In the case of comedy and mime, these approaches have led to several intriguing insights into the complexity of sexualities. One interesting interpretation builds on a different aspect of Foucault's theory of sexuality and examines the popular representations of pleasures. In 1997 Davidson reviewed the Greek comic evidence, along with other literary and material evidence, and concluded that the Greeks “felt a civic responsibility to manage all appetites, to train themselves to deal with them, without trying to conquer them absolutely” (Davidson 1997, 313). A focus on appetites in Greek comedy and mime takes into account the evidence for pleasures outside a simple phallocentric model and therefore reveals a more complex picture of ancient sexualities.

In an illuminating article from around the same time, Hubbard challenged the scholarly overemphasis on sexual passivity as the predominant social and political issue of Athens and argued that Greek comic poets were in fact singling out the practice of pederasty as a symbol of the elite (Hubbard 1998). Hubbard's emphasis on class and social differences in the formation of various cultural attitudes about sexuality serves as another important corrective to the earlier emphasis on institutional displays of power. Around the same time, Wohl saw the potential for a “more pervasive and persistent instability in the sexuality of classical Athens” and suggested that, in the literary treatment of Alcibiades, we find a notion of eros more complicated than the power dynamic between active and passive (Wohl 1999, 352). More recently, Hordern's analysis of the mimes for women and for men, and his work on Sophron more generally, has contextualized questions of humor and audience reception and has opened the field of mime to further study (Hordern 2002, 2004).

Much remains to be done in terms of gender and sexuality in the Roman mime, but recent studies of Roman comedy have opened up new directions in the field, beginning with Rosivach's thoughtful discussion of power, social status, and the sexual exploitation of women in both Greek and Roman New Comedy (Rosivach 1998). Fontaine's examination of Plautine sexual humor is also especially useful (Fontaine 2009, 201–40). Several other scholars focus on the metatheatrical aspects of Plautine comedy, as well as issues of

audience reception (Moore 1998; McCarthy 2000; Slater 2000). While these authors do not discuss gender or sexuality at length, the research demonstrates the importance of a variety of approaches to the complicated comic evidence.

Meanwhile, studies of ancient Roman sexuality more generally have also advocated an approach sensitive to reader response and to the complexity of Roman society. Richlin has emphasized the importance of a history of the body as a means of correcting the scholarly erasure of women in the study of the Roman past (Richlin 1997). Zajko's (2009) reading of gender in Ovid, Nisbet's (2003) study of Greek epigram under the Roman Empire, and Gunderson's (2003) interpretation of masculinity and Roman declamation have furthered the use of queer theory in classics. Additionally, recent works by Rabinowitz and Auanger (2002), Skinner (2005), and Faraone and McClure (2006) have expanded our perspective to include the more nuanced evidence of female homoeroticism and female desires. Williams (2010), in turn, examines Roman sexual terminology and views of effeminate and masculine behaviors. These more comprehensive readings direct our attention beyond elite male pleasures and normative social institutions and advance our knowledge of the multivalent popular genres of ancient comedy and mime.

Greek Comedy

Old, Middle, and New Comedy contain themes as varied as today's comedies. Nevertheless, they are especially rich sources of information on cultural attitudes about gender and sexuality. In the case of Old Comedy in the fifth century bce, the Athenian poets typically presented their efforts before large audiences at major festivals. Heavy emphasis was placed on winning the festivals' competitions, but also on developing a special connection to the audience by commenting humorously on public events and figures during festival time, when, as Henderson has described, "the city organized itself, established who was who, and demonstrated what was important" (Henderson 1990, 287). So Old Comedy's graphic representations of sex and politics, charged with social importance, can help us understand the multiple layers of Athenian attitudes about gender and sexuality.

Because Old Comedy connects sex and politics, it is especially rife with evidence of elite citizen-male attitudes. In the *Poleis* of Eupolis for example, two comic actors, probably representing male Athenian citizens, watch a chorus of subordinate city states and sexually assess

each one. They compare the womanly island of Chios to “a horse that doesn't need a whip,” since she is so obedient and prompt in sending men and warships (Eup. Fr. 246 *PCG*). They notice Kyzikos “loaded with money,” which leads one of the men to recall the time he was on guard duty there and had sex with “a woman, a boy, and an old man ...all for a dime” (Eup. Fr. 247 *PCG*). Although only fragments, comedies like this one offer an important glimpse into how sex, gender, and imperialism could be conflated in the ancient world.

But why was sexuality (and feminization) the political metaphor of choice? On one level, Eupolis creates a straightforward dichotomy between masculine Athens and the feminized subject allies, humorously reflecting popular Athenian imperialistic ideology (Rosen 1998, 173; Storey 2003, 217–21). The poet relies on his audience's assumption of women's subordinate status in order to make a political joke. On another level, however, Eupolis plays with the audience's gender expectations by giving different and distinct female bodies to political forms and hyper-sexualizing the political realm. As a result, he puts on display a sort of civic sexuality in which different political entities are the objects of Athenian male desire. He comically redefines the female sex for a large audience, and he does it with a joke that demonstrates the range of sexual symbolism in Athenian popular performance.

In Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* of 411 bce, the female characters play with conventional expectations of male desire: they go on sex strike to force their husbands to end the Peloponnesian War. The women temporarily dominate the political and sexual situation, while the men are politically disenfranchised and sexually frustrated. Although *Lysistrata*'s humorous inversion may seem to fit a binary model of masculine dominator and feminine subordinate, we also see fluidity in social status, as the comedy conflates, for maximum comic effect, the roles of prostitute, political leader, and cultic representative (Gilhuly 2009, 140–79). In *Ecclesiazusae* also, as Compton-Engle has demonstrated, the female characters that disguise themselves as men “choose to take on masculine attributes” (Compton-Engle 2003, 521). Of course, temporary reversals of gender roles are a comic convention of festival time, yet these reversals also reveal that femininity and masculinity are not simple and static states. On the comic stage, gender attributes—and ideas about sexuality and its connection to the public life of the polis—are complex enough to afford rich opportunities for play.

In addition to revealing male desires, *Lysistrata* contains many jokes about female desires. So the younger women continuously express how difficult it is to refrain from sex. Faraone (1997, 39) asserts that Aristophanes represents the young women pejoratively,

since “they appear foolish and easily manipulated by their bodily desires, especially the desire for sex and wine,” while Lysistrata and the older women valiantly keep the sex strike on track. In this view, Lysistrata is heroic because she shows mastery over her desires and takes sex seriously. Yet it is also noteworthy that, in a society in which the Athenian statesman Pericles can claim that the most valuable citizen women are the ones least talked about (Thuc. 2.45.2), this comedy openly celebrates women's friendship and erotic desires—even if it focuses humorously on the desires of wealthy young women for better dildos and more attentive husbands.

In other comedies, Aristophanes plays with his audience's assumptions about social class and sexual behavior. In *Knights* for example, Demos (“the People”) acquires a power-crazed slave who wreaks havoc on the household; nevertheless the slave, employing the rhetoric of a public leader, continually represents himself as a “lover” (*erastēs*) of Demos (Ar. *Eq.* 732; Monoson 1994; Hubbard 1998). In multivalent performances such as these, sexuality is linked to civic identity, while the boundaries of gender are more fluid than static.

This makes sense for a genre in which male actors play female characters; but Aristophanes uses even this as an opportunity to play with conventional notions of gender and legitimate desires. So in his *Thesmophoriazusae*, produced in Athens in the same year as *Lysistrata*, Aristophanes lampoons the tragic poet Agathon by representing him on stage in a woman's clothing, an animal skin, and a hairnet. Agathon explains to the audience: “I coordinate my outfits with my thoughts. To be a poet, a man must have the same ways as the play that he is composing. If he's composing plays about women, his body must have communion with women's ways” (Ar. *Th.* 148–52). Zeitlin links Agathon's peculiar choice of costume to mimesis (Zeitlin 1981, 303–4). By portraying Agathon's flexibility and willingness to subject his body to feminization, Aristophanes metatheatrically highlights the idea of gender role playing. This joke works in part, then, because it implies that the citizen Agathon's posture lacks physical dignity; in Athenian comedy, how a public figure acts, how he constructs and maintains his public identity, is a recurring theme (Stehle 2002; Compton-Engle 2003). On another level, the joke subtly alludes to Agathon's long-standing relationship with his beloved, Pausanias (Pl. *Prt.* 315D–E). Agathon's body, then, is more than just a political symbol; it involves his subjective and personal experience. The scene reminds us that there are competing images of the body, even outside of the carnivalesque role playing of the festival.

In contrast to Old Comedy, Greek Middle Comedy, from approximately 400 to 320 bce, focuses less on politics; nevertheless, these comedies continue to shine a bright light on the sexual habits of

individual public figures. In *Demosatyr*s for example, the fourth-century comic poet Eubulos questions the masculinity of the extravagant Athenian citizen Ktesippos, stating that Ktesippos “doesn't shave three times a day anymore” and is becoming “a man liked by women, but not men” (Fr. 4 PCG). The pejorative implication is that this public figure had been shaving frequently in order to prolong his youthful appearance and attract men.

Greek New Comedy, from roughly 325 to 290 bce, takes as its focus citizen families and citizen identity through themes such as marriage, love, and rape. For example, the plot of Menander's *Epitrepontes* (*The Arbitration*) revolves around an Athenian citizen named Charisios, who discovers that his wife of only five months has given birth. Charisios abandons his wife for her perceived unfaithfulness and exposes the child. Then he discovers that he is, in fact, the father of his wife's child: during an earlier religious festival he had raped her. Menander's comedy ends in the contented reunification of this citizen family. Clearly these domestic comedies place a high value on citizen marriage and on legitimate children, and they promote the marriage laws of the democratic city state. In a book on Menander and democracy, Lape thus argues that Greek New Comedy demonstrates a “politics of sexuality” (Lape 2003, 138).

As in Old Comedy, this sort of civic sexuality revolves around elite male citizen pleasures and desires. In his sociological study of New Comedy, Rosivach evaluates the representations of heterosexual relationships on stage and reasonably concludes that the society greatly privileges men; moreover, “[t]he rape motif in its essentials validates the notion that this is the way things should be. What is also essential to the motif is that the rapist be from a wealthy family: society could not tolerate behavior like this from its poor” (Rosivach 1998, 49). Clearly Greek New Comedy reaffirms on a major scale citizen-males' desires and normative sexual values.

Nevertheless, even in the few extant sources available, we see variations within these major plots. In Menander's *Samia* for example, an old man lives with a *hetaira* or companion rather than a wife. The relationship is unusual in New Comedy and reveals the significance of the stock character of the *hetaira*, who, as Henry described, “is outside the *oikos*, yet reunites this *oikos*; who legally could not marry or have legitimate children, yet who acts as a mother and wife” (Henry 1985, 115). In general, Menander's comic situations promote heteronormative practices. Yet they also reveal a complexity of sexual attitudes not unified under a monolithic system.

Greek Mime

In a compelling article on street theater in ancient Greece, Forsdyke has argued against the formalist and “institutional perspective” of many scholars of ancient Greek law. Forsdyke suggests that public shaming rituals, such as stoning, were a kind of street theater sharing some of the key features of carnival (Forsdyke 2008, 5). Performances occurred in numerous circumstances in the ancient world. When we select as evidence only the mass public festivals of Greek comedy, we downplay the cultural significance of attitudes about gender and sexuality in other types of performance.

Mime, as an umbrella term, includes a variety of these minor ancient performances. Our primary extant examples of this genre, however, are the Hellenistic literary mimes of Herodas and Theocritus, as well as earlier, coarser prose scenes from Sophron. Regardless of whether and how the extant mimes were performed, they are important for their focus on the private lives of non-elites such as women, slaves, adulterers, and merchants. Indeed in these mimes we see the (male) representation of women's desires and various configurations of female social identity.

In many instances the mimes, like peep shows into a forbidden world, play on elite male suspicions of what is not publicly performed, namely the desires of women, slaves, and the lower classes. In Herodas' fifth mime for example, the mistress of the house believes her male slave is cheating on her, so she has him tied up so he can receive two thousand lashes and a tattoo on his face; she then changes her mind. In another voyeuristic mime of Herodas, two women inside a house have a private conversation about a dildo (Herod. 6). The situation is ordinary—two women discussing the quality of merchandise—and yet, because of their interest in an erotic object, it is socially charged. One woman begins the conversation: “darling Coritto, who sewed that scarlet dildo for you?” (Herod. 6.18–19). The two women then discuss at length the dildo's fine craftsmanship, comparing it to the work of Athena (l. 65). While this mime presents only a male author's humorous riff on female pleasure, it nevertheless fits outside the simple power dichotomy of sexual domination and submission. Taken altogether, all these are important because they reveal the possibility of alternative configurations of ancient sexuality, as well as elite perceptions of these sociosexual differences.

Of course, it is also possible to interpret this ancient evidence in moral terms and to argue that Herodas is exposing women's secrets and shaming a group of “sexually avaricious women” (Ussher 1985, 62). For readers today, the erotic fixation on an object may recall the

famous complaint of the anthropologist Rubin:

A person is not considered immoral, is not sent to prison, and is not expelled from her or his family, for enjoying spicy cuisine. But a person may go through all this and more for enjoying shoe leather. Ultimately, of what possible social significance is it if a person likes to masturbate over a shoe? It may even be nonconsensual, but since we do not ask permission of our shoes to wear them, it hardly seems necessary to obtain dispensation to come on them. (Rubin 1993, 35)

In our times, the revelation of any private desires invites public scrutiny and consequent moral judgment. Or, as Rubin would have it, sex is “guilty until proven innocent” (Rubin 1993, 11).

Roman Comedy

Roman comedies, adaptations of Greek New Comedies, were also public events. Even more than their Greek models, however, the extant comedies of Plautus and Terence equate the performance of sexuality with citizen status. In the *Stichus* of Plautus, for example, a slave defends the fact that he “can drink, make love, and invite friends to dinner” by reminding the audience that, of course, this comedy is set in Athens (ll. 446–8). As Ed Cohen points out in this volume, the Greek and Roman systems of slavery do not fit into one neat model of oppressor and victimized slave (Cohen, this volume; Cohen 2000). Plautus' slave sees that he would have had different opportunities in Athens, and his version of Athens functions as a utopia against which he can contrast his public—and more erotically challenged—status in Rome.

Yet Roman social hierarchies can also limit a citizen-male's desires. So in the *Curculio* (*The Weevil*) of Plautus a slave warns the hero: “as long as you keep away from the bride, the widow, the virgin, the young man, and free-born boys, love whomever you want” (ll. 37–8). Of course, some erotic constraints may be overcome. In Terence's *Eunuchus*, the wealthy Chaerea disguises himself as a slave eunuch and sneaks into a prostitute's house to rape a young woman named Pamphila. After the rape, he discovers that Pamphila is not a slave but comes from a wealthy Athenian citizen family, and he is delighted that he can marry her. Roman citizen men can make fun of themselves: as the young master Calidorus remarks to his slave in Plautus' *Pseudolus*, “it's no fun unless the lover plays the fool” (l. 238). Citizen men, in particular, are represented as having a wide range of opportunities for gender play on the comic stage.

Beyond representations of citizen-male desires, do female figures appear static and ornate, or similarly multivalent? In this respect, Plautus' *Casina* of 186 bce has received much scholarly attention for what McCarthy has called its "single-minded focus on sexuality" (McCarthy 2000, 121; see also O'Bryhim 1989). In this comedy a father and a son compete for the same girl. The father, believing he has won her, describes her as "delicious" and then asks his slave to procure equivalently delicious food: "Take my wallet. Go and buy food. Be quick, but I want it in a fancy way, tender tidbits, just like she is tender" (Plaut. *Cas.* 490–2). He requests aphrodisiac shellfish (l. 493), and it is clear that he views *Casina* as an object of desire, a delicacy to be consumed. Yet the plan is short-lived: his wife uncovers his plot. What happens next is a startling departure. As Slater points out, the wife's "surprise and rage motivate her to do what no other matrona in Roman comedy does: to seize control of the plot and become for the remainder of the play the poeta in charge of the action" (Slater 2000, 84). In other words, Plautus' creative departure from his audience's expectations demands an understanding of female subordination but then transgresses the model in a new and particularly original way.

Andrews' recent reading of this same comedy likewise focuses on the complexity of the figure of *Casina* (Andrews 2004). As Andrews notes, male and female characters vie for stage control and for control of the figure of *Casina* throughout the comedy, even after *Casina* is replaced by a man in disguise. In these circumstances, *Casina*'s double identity, as young woman or transvestite, shifts depending on the scene:

Though conspicuously absent from the play, *Casina* remains the locus of power in the comedy, assuming various permutations throughout. Her identity changes and evolves according to the intent and gender of the character creating an image of her or directing her actions so that the audience must gradually formulate and re-shape an identity for her as the comic action unfolds. (Andrews 2004, 449)

As Andrews shows, the ambiguity of the figure of *Casina* establishes the limits of a model of sexuality based on a simple binarism between male dominator and female object and invites analysis on the basis of the notion of gender as a performative act. Dover's and Foucault's model of ancient sexuality, then, uncovers a central power dynamic in the performance of sexual relationships in ancient comedy and mime; but this neat hierarchy is not the entire mechanism. Roman comedies highlight the desires of the elite citizen-male yet they also reveal the complexity of ancient erotic jokes.

Roman Mime

Like Roman comedies, Roman mimes took place at state festivals and other venues, for instance gladiatorial events, chariot races, and even aristocratic funerals. These spectacles were performed without masks and included a variety of short acts by barefoot jugglers, acrobats, magicians, poets, comedians, fake fighters, puppet masters, and strippers. While we do not know a great deal about the content of Roman mimes in any period, we have reactions to these performances by elite authors such as Cicero, Ovid, and Suetonius (e.g. Cic. *Cael.* 65–6; Ov. *Tr.* 2.519–20; Suet. *Nero* 54). From these sources it is safe to say that Roman mime created an important opportunity for spectator performance: it allowed elite public figures to perform their reactions to its erotic content. So in 56 bce, Cicero defends Caelius in court by maligning the reputation of Clodia, arguing that the case is more appropriate for a mime than for a comedy (Cic. *Cael.* 65). In 55 bce, Cato the Younger, known for his great decorum, decides to depart in the middle of a mime on the grounds that his austere presence was distracting to both the actors and the other members of the audience (Sen. *Ep.* 97.7; Mart. 1; Val. Max. 2.10.8). Suetonius recounts that a mime offended Augustus by a lewd gesture (*Aug.* 68). And the year 19 ce saw a mandate that men and women of equestrian and senatorial status could not act in the arena or on stage. Clearly the relationship between performance and audience at these popular events was grounded in the idea of different sexual behaviors for different social groups.

Even Roman funeral mimes become occasions to reenact a public leader's idiosyncrasies and thus reinforce his public identity. According to Polybius, aristocratic Roman families commissioned “masks in the likeness of family leaders.” Family members brought these masks to funerals, “putting them on men who appear to have the closest resemblance to the original” (Plb. 6.53). The actors, in turn, had often studied a leader in his lifetime in order to imitate him after death. These actors were typically slaves or freedmen, so, as Sumi has pointed out, “the act of impersonation brought together the actor and aristocrat, two usually antithetical social categories,” and thus even “the Roman funeral contained elements of the carnivalesque” (Sumi 2002, 581–2). Roman mimes therefore underscore the performative aspect of identity, while they speak to an equally strong link between social status and legitimate sexual behavior. If Sumi is correct, they also reveal a different notion of socially acceptable play, underscoring Propp's sentiment that “each era possesses a specific sense of humor” (Propp 1990, 14). The Roman mimes thus indicate a configuration of humor and sexuality different from our own, with a greater

connection between sexual expression and public identity.

Conclusion

Greek and Roman popular performances often highlight sexual categories in a way that reveals societal problems. Given the frequently topical material and heterogeneous audiences, comedy and mime are central sources for understanding the complexity of sexual desires, habits, and attitudes in the ancient world. At times, the producers of comedy and mime use sex as a metaphor for imperial ambitions. At other times, they employ rigid sexual categories and pejorative stereotypes, especially to highlight political problems with public leaders. As a result, comedy and mime can reveal normative sexual attitudes and behaviors. Yet the genres could also shape these social categories by highlighting specific aspects of sexuality, like the desires of citizen men, and by silencing others, such as the very few references, outside of Greek mime, to female sexual desires. Of course, these very silences beg interpretation, a dilemma that Butler has described:

The prohibition thus conjures the speech act that it seeks to constrain, and becomes caught up in a circular, imaginary production of its own making. (Butler 1997, 31)

Indeed, when we envision the performances of mime and comedy, we must consider that the very performance of sexuality reified practice and gave an additional dimension to contemporary social categories such as citizen, pederast, slave, wife, adulteress, or prostitute. These sexual expressions, then, reflect the unique genius of individual authors, yet they also reveal larger cultural attitudes. In the showcase of popular performances, Greek and Roman artists offered powerful visions and new narratives by which audiences could define their desires. Like an image reflected in a funhouse, actors in comedy and mime do not represent objective reality. Distortions, and a complicated dimensionality, appear to be more the case but they serve to reveal those “unexpected magnitudes” once mentioned by the poet Wallace Stevens (1957, 517). Indeed these popular performances communicate in a highly ritualistic interplay, which encompasses both gender and sexuality and tells us a great deal about the complexity of life in ancient Athens and Rome.

Guide to Further Reading

Henderson 1975 is the first major work to address the obscene language and sexual dimension of Greek comedy; Henderson 1991 surveys the historical evidence that suggests attendance at theatrical performances on women's part. Rosivach 1998 explores heterosexual relationships in Greek and Roman New Comedy and stresses the importance of social status. Halliwell 2008 provides an expansive examination of humor and its many uses in Greek culture. Williams 2010 analyzes Roman homosexuality and masculinity, with a focus on power relationships; although he omits Terence, he does cover selected evidence from Plautine comedy. Hubbard 2003 offers a rich collection of sources, including much evidence from comedy and mime, with an accessible introduction to the field.

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Chapter 23

Greco-Roman Satirical Poetry

Ralph M. Rosen and Catherine C. Keane

The literary genres considered in this chapter extend across a chronological sweep of some seven centuries and were composed for different audiences, in different poetic forms and for different performance occasions. As genres of satire, however, they nevertheless have profound affiliations with each other.¹ All are shaped, for example, by a dominating, even domineering, *ego* that purports to be the poet himself, a figure who presents himself as unhappy with the world around him—individuals, politicians, institutions—and committed to a rhetoric of complaint and moralizing. Satiric poetry is also always, at some level, a poetry of laughter, which is to say that its success depends primarily on its ability to amuse an audience, even as the satirist pretends to instruct them on moral behavior. And we can make another, rather striking, claim for satirical poets: they composed some of the most sexualized literature of antiquity. This may seem at first glance a hyperbolic statement, especially when one can easily point to far more explicitly *erotic* genres in classical literature than those considered in this chapter. But the sexuality of satirical genres is often subtler and more variegated than anything we find in poetry that is self-consciously “about” sex. The reasons for this are complex—and even somewhat paradoxical, insofar as satire may well be one of the least “erotic” literary modes one can imagine. As we shall see, however, sex and sexuality—whether as a trope of transgression, as a comic flourish, or as a metaphor for the poet's self-presentation—turn out to be continually implicated in the satiric project itself.

Satire offers a perfect home for sex-talk of all sorts. This is poetry invested in the low or, more accurately, a pretense of the low. Satire takes for its palette the world as it is, in all its materiality, unedited and without nuance, so its subject matter is often utterly mundane and quotidian, sometimes even intended to shock. Sex enters this world not mediated by *erōs* and *amor*, *loci amoeni*, the beauty and

spiritual bliss of physical union, and so on, but rather suffused with coarseness and ugliness, tawdry, mercenary physicality and a vulgar, “dirty” language to accompany it. Since sexuality concerns, fundamentally, relationships between human beings, one can easily see how it intersects with the social and political spheres as well, where people also interact with each other, likewise playing out dynamics of reciprocity, power, desire, and fulfillment. Often, then, as we shall discuss in this chapter, satire's penchant for focusing on the coarseness of sex parallels a similar preoccupation with the seamy, cynical side of politics and social interaction, such that sex will become politicized, and socio-politics sexualized. The interpersonal dynamics of sex, moreover, parallel in striking ways the interpersonal dynamics between the satirist, his targets, and his audiences. Ancient satirists, for example, will often present themselves, aggressively and narcissistically, as “fuckers” not only of specific individuals, but, metaphorically as well, as “fuckers” of all who deserve their contempt. At the same time, when they want to emphasize their impotence in the face of everything that bothers them, they present themselves as “fucked,” if not “raped”—unwilling, passive partners in a sexualized relationship with the corrupt world around them. The paradoxes and hints of scandal that result from this conflation of the satiric and the sexual account for the particular kind of humor we associate with the best satirical literature—scurrilous, ironic, and sarcastic. Sex, in short, is far more than a mere “element” or “theme” added by the satirist as color or ornament to his work. It emerges, rather, as one of the genre's defining obsessions, guiding so many aspects of the satirist's program of indignation and comic mockery, even when a poem may not be at all “about sex.”

Much of this fondness for sexuality undoubtedly stems from the remarkable freedom of speech that satirists across all periods of classical antiquity enjoyed.² In no other genre can poets speak so openly and explicitly about sex, and the simple ability to do so offers huge potential for humor. Indeed ancient satirists took a mischievous delight in primary obscenities and graphic vulgarisms that would be indecorous, or even scandalous, were they not deployed in the service of the poet's self-righteousness and claims to moral superiority (Henderson 1991, Halliwell 2008, 215–63, Richlin 1992, 2–31). Explicit sexualized speech has a certain shock value, and transgressions of this sort, licensed—and hence detoxified—by the protocols of genre and occasion, elicit laughter rather than offense in a sympathetic audience. This is a very specific kind of laughter, a laughter that arises when language exposes things that proper, decorous society normally conceals (Richlin 1992, 59–63, discussing Freud's theorizing on this point). Hence one of the great paradoxes of

satire: it speaks the language of the low, the improper, the dirty, while advocating the path of the high and pure.

Greek Iambos

The term “iambos” (Greek *iambos*, Latin *iambus*) was used in classical antiquity to refer to a type of poetry in which satire and personal mockery found a comfortable home (West 1974, 22–39, Brown 1997, Rotstein 2010). It is a Greek word that derives from the meter in which archaic poets composed and performed their satirical pieces, but it came to be used in antiquity more generally of vituperative poetry, regardless of the meters deployed (West 1974, 25). The Roman poet Catullus, for example, could refer to his aggressive poems (even those that were not composed in the iambic meter) as *iambi* (36.5), as could Horace, who boasted (*Epist.* 1.19.23) that with his *Epodes* he was the first Roman poet to import Greek *iambi* into Roman poetry. Relatively little poetry survives of the Greek iambic tradition, and only a handful of poems that appear to be complete: mostly we have just fragments, preserved more or less haphazardly throughout antiquity by excerptors, grammarians, and lexicographers, so our knowledge of this tradition is frustratingly limited. We will therefore focus in this section on the two poets, Archilochus of Paros (seventh century bce) and Hipponax of Ephesus (sixth century bce), who were the best representatives of the Greek iambos in antiquity and from whom, as a consequence of their ancient reputation, the greatest part of the surviving poetry comes (for other, less well preserved Greek iambic poets, see Rotstein 2010, 25–57).

Despite the fact that they are often treated together out of scholarly convenience, Archilochus and Hipponax are stylistically quite distinct from each other. Archilochus composed in a variety of genres and meters, not all of them satirical, and experimented with a wide variety of literary and linguistic registers. He could be, by turns, “Homeric” or obscene, which is to say “high” or “low,” depending (one infers, since we have little reliable information on the matter) on audience or performance occasion. The fragments of Hipponax suggest, by contrast, a more monochromatic poet, drawn to lurid topics and freewheeling obscenity. He was a master parodist (Degani 1984, 187–205, Rosen 1990) and paid plenty of attention to poetics and style, but he seems to have favored a more consistently comic, sensationalizing posture throughout his work than Archilochus.

To put it simply, sex is all over the poetry of Archilochus and Hipponax. They both clearly recognized the humorous potential of

sexually explicit language or suggestive innuendo, and both seemed completely free of any inhibition. Consider, for example, the following fragments.³

Archilochus:

She was sucking like a Thracian or Phrygian sucking beer
through a tube,
And bending over, she was hard at work.

(Fr. 42 West)

—
...and his cock
...swelled up like that of
a donkey from Priene, fed on grain.

(Fr. 43 W)

Hipponax:

...the motherfucker Bupalos, with Arete,
drawing back his unspeakable (fore-)skin.

(Fr. 12.2–3 W)

—
...on the ground [
with our clothes off [
we were biting and [kissing
looking out through the doors [
so we wouldn't be caught [
naked [
and she was in a rush [
and I was fucking [...] and
drawing out to the tip as if drying a sausage,
ordering Bupalos to go to hell ...

(Fr. 84.9–18 W)

These passages illustrate well the various hallmarks of iambographic sex. To begin with, the scenes are largely heterosexual, recounted in the first person and from the perspective of the male narrator. Whether iambic poetry should be considered “heteronormative” is difficult to say, given the relatively small sample of surviving fragments, but it is perhaps worth noting that, in the fragments we do have, Archilochus and Hipponax have little to say about homosexuality or homosexual sex.⁴ Their heterosexual world, however, is vividly presented, as we can see even from the small sampling quoted above, through primary obscenities (words for “cock”

or “fuck,” for example), suggestive imagery (“tubes,” “bending over”), and a decidedly phallocentric bias in narrative detail (erections, foreskins, and ejaculations). There seems little question that the intended effect is comic—or at least so one might easily conclude from similes involving donkeys and sausages, or scenes of public sex, voyeurism, and fellatio!

It is difficult to reconstruct the details of the various picaresque narratives in which Archilochus and Hipponax situate themselves, but there can be little question that most of them, if not all, ultimately assimilate sex with the satirist's stance of complaint and mockery. This can be seen most clearly in the stories that circulated in antiquity about each poet's life, stories evidently based on actual poems by Archilochus and Hipponax, in which each poet attacks a target that has in some way interfered with the poet's sexual relationship with a woman. In the case of Archilochus, the story goes that he was supposed to marry a woman named Neobule, the daughter of Lykambes, but for some reason Lykambes reneged on the arrangement and called off the marriage. In response, Archilochus supposedly composed poems that not only attacked Lykambes, but also accused Neobule (and her sisters, as some sources tell us) of having illicit sex in a temple of Hera. Shamed by his invectives, the story continues, Lykambes and his daughters hanged themselves. An anecdote with a remarkably similar outcome was also told of Hipponax, who allegedly attacked the sculptor Bupalos (and his brother Athenis, also a sculptor) so aggressively for making an unseemly image of the poet that they, too, hanged themselves out of shame (Degani 1984, 20–4, Rosen 1988, 30–2).

The surviving fragments offer little specific detail about these stories, but all the main ingredients for satire are there—in particular, a perceived wrong against the poet and mockery of the blameworthy target. In Archilochus, for example, we find a series of epodes directed at Lykambes (172–81 W), which allude to a broken trust (e.g., 173 W), and with the publication in 1974 of the so-called Cologne papyrus (P. Köln 58.1–35), now the longest fragment of Archilochus that we have, we catch a glimpse of Neobule herself, dismissed now by the poet as past her prime, and crazed with insatiable sexual desire (196a 24–30 W). The Cologne papyrus in fact illustrates well just how closely sex and satire are intertwined. The fragment recounts in the first person an encounter between a young woman and the speaker, who is likely supposed to be the poet. The speaker is trying to persuade the woman to have sex, but she resists and tells him that, if he is in such a hurry, he should pursue Neobule instead, “a beautiful, tender girl” (l. 6) in their household. This occasions an extended rant against Neobule from the speaker, and it concludes with these abusive

lines:

To hell with her!
Don't let [anyone make me]
have a wife like that
and become a joke to my neighbors.
No, it's you I really want.
For you're not untrustworthy or two-faced,
but she's very impulsive
and makes many men [her lovers?]

(Archil. Fr. 196a 31–8 W)

The poem reveals all the classic conceits of the satirist: he has been wronged by someone (here, Neobule, described as “untrustworthy” and “two-faced”) and so, out of his sense of self-righteous indignation, must retaliate. If, as is likely, the disputed betrothal of Archilochus and Neobule lies behind this poem, we see the poet first as the spurned lover, who is angry and abject. His retaliation, then, fixates on the very thing he has been denied—sex with Neobule—in an attempt to deflect attention from his own failures with her. His attack on Neobule's sexuality (she is promiscuous, unattractive, and so on), will in turn elicit malicious laughter from his audience and will shift the balance of power back to him (on such satiric strategies, see Rosen 2007, 23–6). In the meantime the narrative frame, which shows the poet trying to seduce Neobule's younger sister and ultimately having his way with her, completes this shift.

The poem ends with a scene (Fr. 196a 48–53 W) in which the poet's seduction seems to culminate in an ejaculation (the text is unfortunately not complete quite where one would want it to be):⁵

And with my hands I gently felt for her breasts (?)
[where?] she revealed her young skin,
the approach of her youth,
And caressing her beautiful body all over
I released my (white?) force,
touching her blond (hair?).

(Archil. Fr. 196a 48–53 W)

If the final image is not overtly obscene, it is certainly graphic, whatever the missing adjective was, and adds a humorous, almost epigrammatic zing to the end of the poem. Sex, in the end, is the currency of power for the satirist: he may be “fucked” by the world, but ultimately he will construct himself as the world's “fucker.”

Hipponax, too, portrays himself in strikingly similar ways, sometimes as the abject, sexually impotent victim, other times as an

invincible priapic force. Fragment 92 West is an excellent example of Hipponax being sexually *in extremis*. The exact context is far from clear, but the frequent assumption that Hipponax is being treated here for impotence by a Lydian woman seems likely enough.

She spoke in Lydian, “faskati ...krolea,”
in Ass-speak: “your ass [
and the testicles of my phallus (?) [
she thrashed with a fig branch like [a scapegoat?
secure with forked sticks (?) [
and with the two afflictions [
the fig branch on one side [
came down on me from above [
splattering with shit [
and the latrine [= anus?] stank; and dung beetles swarming
around
came attracted by the smell, more than fifty of them;
some of them attacked [and
overturned (?), others [...
and others attacking the doors of
Ass-ville [= his anus] [...

(Archil. Fr. 92 W)

Whatever the reason, Hipponax writes himself here into a narrative that involves a Lydian woman “thrashing his balls” (ll. 3–4) with a branch (l. 5) and applying to his anus something that makes him defecate (ll. 8–10). This rather startling scene attracts a swarm of dung beetles (ll. 11–12), which then proceed to attack his body, being attracted by the smell (l. 12). We do not have the entire poem, but there can be little doubt that it was meant to come across as outrageous and comic: it is sexual, scatological, and brazenly indecorous—but playful throughout.⁶ Here the poet *himself* becomes an object of comic ridicule: he is supine, splayed out, and penetrated by instruments administered by a foreign woman.

Elsewhere, however, Hipponax portrays himself aligning his sexual prowess with his moral superiority over his target, Bupalos. If we bundle together the following disparate fragments, we may catch a glimpse of various scenes in his poems in which Hipponax casts himself as the far worthier, if not necessarily more successful, rival to Bupalos in the erotic pursuit of Arete:

And they were drinking
from the pail; he and Arete, in turn each drank a toast
to each other. (Fr. 14 W)
Why did you [Arete?] shack up with that awful Bupalos? (Fr. 15

W)

In the dark, I went to Arete's place, with a heron of good omen
on my right,
and set up camp there. (Fr. 16 W)
For Arete, bending over for me in front of the lamp ... (Fr. 17
W)

What navel-cutter [= “midwife”] wiped and washed you,
you crazy man, as you wriggled around? (Fr. 19 W)⁷

Thus, some people were cursing that polluted Bupalos. (Fr. 95a
W)

Hipponax' paradoxical self-portrait—impotent and humiliated at one point, boastful and phallic the next—applies a comic strategy typical of satirists across the entire history of the genre, a strategy calibrated to direct the sympathies of their audiences to themselves and their cause. For many satirists, then, sexuality functions analogously to the activity of satire itself: in each realm, as a sexual creature embedded in his narratives and as a self-righteous blamer of others, the satirist seeks to exercise power and to come out, as it were, on top. It is a risky business, as satirists are fond of reminding us, but there is always a safety net: for sexual impotence, especially when it is portrayed as unjustified and unfair, can be funny, and the ability to generate humor in the end affirms a *poetic* potency that always trumps the poet's failures as a character in his own work.

Priapus and Roman Poetry of the Obscene

Like the Greek iambists, Roman authors of satiric and invective poetry pose as sexual beings. The comparatively large body of extant Roman satiric texts shows us this figure interacting with the world in many ways, generally being driven by a prurient interest in the sexual behavior of others. In a pathbreaking study, Richlin (1992) describes the normative and punishing character of Roman sexual humor and identifies its loudest spokesman in the intriguing god Priapus. This god was known as a guardian of private property, especially gardens, where his ithyphallic statue was meant to threaten lewd punishment to intruders and thieves. He is a recurring character in obscene poetry, including the *Priapea*, a collection of eighty short Latin poems of

disputed provenance.⁸ Priapus emblemizes aggressive male sexuality in its particularly Roman form. In the *Priapea*, he brandishes his natural weapon before potential intruders, promising shaming punishments that fit the gender and age of each offender (Poem 13):

Boy, I warn you, you'll be sliced open [sc. through the anus];
girl, you'll be fucked;
a third punishment [sc. oral rape] awaits a bearded thief.

No matter that the statue's phallus is wooden (see Poems 6, 10, and 73)—all the better to perform on demand.

A fascinating document of both Roman sexual discourse and satiric poetics, the *Priapea* expresses a jumble of conservative and subversive ideologies. On the one hand, Priapus celebrates the enforcement of social norms. He defends private property, penetrates others, and, using brash circular logic, brands his victims as sexual deviants. He therefore seems to represent the way the traditional power structure virtually “stains” marginal figures (to use Richlin's term) for easy identification. On the other hand, Priapus seems to celebrate transgression against decorum when he asserts that his realm sanctions, even demands, obscene speech and action. These two qualities are combined, to comic effect, in the sexualized Roman satirist figure.

The god of the *Priapea* recognizes that poetry about sex engages readers' own desires and impulses. The book, like the garden, is a special zone characterized by the god's license and self-display. The opening poem invites readers to embrace this atmosphere (1.1–8):

You who are about to read the wanton jests of this unkempt
verse,
put aside that native Latin sternness.
In this shrine neither Phoebus' sister nor Vesta dwells,
nor the goddess who was born from her father's head,
but the ruddy garden-guard, immoderately endowed,
whose groin is covered by no clothing.
So either hold out a tunic to cover that part,
or use the same eyes you've trained on it to read these poems.

This picture of wonder-struck visitors gazing at the god's monstrous member has the effect of marking all readers as willing trespassers who are attracted and aroused by Priapus' indecency. It suggests that readers are lured in by the text's promise of vicarious visual titillation, or even vicarious participation in sex acts. In short, Priapus both justifies his work and plays up the notion that it is scandalous, implicating his accusers in their own criticisms. A similarly double-edged strategy is used by the epigrammatist Martial

(c. 40–104 ce). Martial defensively stakes out literary territory for everyday subjects (*Ep.* 10.4), but imagines his work generating shock, shame, and arousal (e.g. 6.60). Like Priapus, he implies that readers come looking not for an amoral perspective on sex, but for the peculiar charge and pleasure that obscenity delivers.

For all the spectacular prominence of the figure of Priapus, then, his garden does not allow mere spectators. The god seems especially pleased to attract readers whom social restrictions are supposed to shield from obscenity (e.g. Poem 8):

“Chaste matrons, get far away from here.
It's unseemly for you to read these scandalous words.”
They don't care a bit, and go straight on—of course,
they've got good taste—and they also
look with pleasure at my big dick, those matrons.

Even these readers, presumably demure but conveniently possessing sexual experience, share in Priapus' production and enjoyment of obscenity—from smug alliance against deviants to participation in obscene wordplay or visualization. The comic image of prim readers encountering erotic content is also a programmatic theme in Martial. The epigrammatist figures his book as a theater, which, like Priapus' garden, demands compliance with house rules. Even someone who shares the values of ancient Rome's most notorious moralist must respect Priapus' terms: “Let no Cato enter my theater—or if he does, let him watch” (Mart. *Ep.* 1 praef. 7; cf. 1.4). Matrons are no more immune; Martial claims to have plenty of female fans (e.g., *Ep.* 3.68, 3.86, 7.88, 11.15, and 11.16). He gleefully notes the societal transgression involved in their reading his more risqué poems: “Chaste woman, I told you up front, warned you, not to read the naughty part of my book. Still, look, you're reading it” (*Ep.* 3.86.1–2). Images of aroused female readers handling Martial's book may be intended to make its contents more titillating to male readers (Fitzgerald 2007, 148). This strategy suggests a more varied and complex function for sexual poetry than what we can glean in Greek iambic fragments: while the iambists mainly show interest in their own experiences, the Roman poet aims to participate in the sexual life of readers.

The Roman Priapic poet's own sexuality, like that of the Greek iambists, is perhaps surprisingly complex. The raping god of the *Priapea* might afflict his victims with impotence (Poem 23; see Chapter 29 in this volume). Nor is Priapus himself immune to disappointment or ill treatment. In one poem he laments the construction of a fence that will keep out potential victims (77). Elsewhere he confesses exhaustion from the frequent visits of amorous women (26, 32). While

these examples duly highlight the intended use of Priapus' phallus, they also tint the god's masculinity with comic ambiguity. On one occasion, Priapus accuses his victims of returning to thieve again, just so they can get caught (51); evidently, the god's phallus pleases in spite of itself, and so his image as punisher is amusingly undermined. Finally, the god can also be seen comically capitulating to his own needs, as in this lament for a lost sexual golden age (33):

The ancient Priapuses had Naiads and Dryads,
and a place to insert a swollen vein.

Now I'm so deprived, and my lust so full to bursting,
I reckon all the nymphs have disappeared.

Sure it's an unseemly act, but so I don't burst from the tension
I'll put down my sickle and find a girlfriend in my hand.

The messy variety in Priapus' sexual dealings makes him more than just an emblem of aggressive, active sexuality; he ranges from the hyper-masculine to what we could call the comically "hypo-masculine."

Even fierce sexually themed invective does more than just pass judgment on others. Horace's raging invective against old women in Epodes 8 and 12 (written in the thirties bce), ostensibly examples of enemy-marking in a book about alliances and conflicts (Mankin 1995, 8–9), actually causes the line between the poet and his ugly targets to blur. Horace attacks these women for unsuccessfully attempting to arouse him; he describes their grotesque anatomy in savage and taunting detail, which conveys his own intense voyeuristic desire and need for relief (see Oliensis 1998, 74–7). In Epode 8, Horace's claim of indifference is belied by his fascination with his partner's body. His closing advice, really an aggressive invitation, ends the poem on a note of heightened desire (ll. 19–20):

To rouse [my penis] from my fastidious groin,
you'll have to get to work with your mouth.

Martial's *Epigrams* play with a similar effect. From one lover the poet cynically demands financial compensation (11.29), from another dirty talk (11.104), and from still another punctuality—to spare him the trouble of masturbating (11.73). Though aggressive, these complaints also humorously suggest the poet's struggles with his own appetites. Similarly, Martial's rejection of an educated woman on the grounds that “my prick often makes grammatical errors” (11.19) expresses both misogynistic resentment and comic failure. And when Martial publicizes another man's secret visits to a prostitute, he conveys a note of voyeuristic excitement as he imagines how the bill adds up (9.4):

Since Galla can be fucked for two gold pieces,
and even more than fucked, if you double the payment,
why does she get ten from you, Aeschylus?
Galla sucks off for less. So what are you buying? Her silence.

Hexameter Satire: The Garden of Diatribe and Diversion

Many Greek and Roman genres are “satiric,” but in antiquity the label “satire” (Latin *satura*) strictly referred to the hexameter genre first produced by Lucilius (late second century bce) and developed by Horace (65–8 bce), Persius (34–62 ce), and Juvenal (early second century ce). There is a certain kinship between epigram and hexameter satire, especially between Martial and his younger contemporary Juvenal. But the economical jokes of exposure practiced in epigram contrast with satire's sustained, colorfully illustrated moralistic attacks. As we shall see, satire's savoring of description even beyond what is necessary to make a moral point creates an interesting tension with its apparent moral agenda.

Beginning with Lucilius, Roman satirists made it their business to probe the everyday, the comic, and the distasteful; this means that sexual desires, relations, and mishaps are standard subjects in the genre. Lucilius' substantial corpus is now only represented by fragments, but some of these clearly recount intimate experiences (“I wetted the bed all over, stained the covers” (1183 W = Warmington 1967) and relate coarse advice on sexual matters (e.g., 1180 W on “anus-wrestling,” *podicis ...palaestra*; and 1182 W noting the different ways boys and women stain their partners). Others concern the inconveniences of marriage and women's licentiousness (290–312, 324–35, 639–46 W); still others appraise women's bodies and behavior (737–42, 921–8 W). In later satire sexual content remains prominent, making a flashy entrance early in Horace's first book of *Satires*, in a poem about ill-advised erotic escapades. Satire 1.2 seems to assert satire's right and duty to discuss human sexuality. Horace's successors follow suit; even the Stoic Persius, generally most concerned with matters of the soul, fills his programmatic first poem with sexually themed invective against contemporary poetry.

The satirists also seem to use sexual material for its shock value, sometimes shifting abruptly from veiled implication to explicit obscenity, and often inserting obscenity in a frame of moralistic diatribe. Such juxtapositions are apparently part of satire's

representational and critical work. Horace punctuates a list of typical crimes in early human civilization with a reference to “the cunt [as] an abominable cause of war” (*Sat.* 1.3.107–8); Juvenal goes from an indirect description of legacy hunters as men who work “at night” to specifying that their “route to the high track [is] a rich old lady's bladder” (*Sat.* 1.37–9; *vesica*, properly “bladder,” crassly substitutes for *vagina*). Juvenal especially aims for surprise and variety in his representations of sex, often by juxtaposing vulgar details with serious musings. This combination is literally embodied by the lust-crazed Empress Messalina, who shamefully displayed to her brothel clients the very womb that produced the noble Britannicus (*Sat.* 6.124), and whom Juvenal also finds noteworthy for her female “erection” (*rigidi tentigine volvae*, *Sat.* 6.129). Similarly, the male prostitute Naevolus sullies a Homeric line, “a man is attracted by the sword,” by replacing the last word (*sideros*) with “pathic” (*kinaidos*, *Sat.* 9.37). This literary play is followed by a famously coarse description of an arduous day on the job (*Sat.* 9.43–4):

[I must] ram my penis—a proper-sized one at that—
into someone's guts and slam into yesterday's dinner ...

This comes amid moralistic complaints about the general decline of traditional social values.

While claiming moral high ground, satirists revel in visualizing other people's private acts (Gunderson 2005). They justify this paradox by emphasizing “extreme” forms of sexual activity (homosexuality, adultery, fornication) that are already traditional targets of moral criticism. Indeed, at times satire seems only to see extremes in human behavior and to use them for both moralistic and voyeuristic purposes. Exemplifying this formula is Horace's Satire 1.2, which explores two kinds of immoderate male desires: lust for married women and addiction to cheap prostitutes. That the actual spectrum of contemporary sexual behavior is surely much more varied does not matter to Horace, who wants to illustrate a black-and-white claim: “there is no medium” (l. 28). This moralist criticizes not just sexual irresponsibility, but the smug delusion of men who, aiming to “avoid vices ...rush right into their opposites” (l. 24). His claims are deliberately unfair and circular. It is specifically *in satire* that “there is no medium;” the genre has built-in “extreme” tendencies in its vision of human morality (cf. Hor. *Sat.* 1.4.27 and 111–13).

In Satire 1.2, sensationalism constantly destabilizes moralism. While the initial abstract moral theme, the danger of extremes, is serious enough, Horace quickly turns to sexually themed examples that approach the absurd: “Maltinus saunters around with his tunic trailing off him; another guy keeps it hiked up all the way to his

obscene groin” (*inguen obscenum*, ll. 25–6). The second of these opposed examples is appropriately startling. There could be no better symbol of what satire does in its representation of the world: obscene material always pops up (see Miller 2005, 118). In further illustrations of how foolish men use their *inguina*, Horace continues to favor the lurid and the ridiculous, as if distracted from his initial interest in the moral and social significance of bodies. Does the satirist *need* to conjure a talking penis to explain the need for moderation to its owner (ll. 68–71), or to envision the entire gamut of acts of revenge that might be taken on an adulterer, including a soaking with slaves' piss (l. 44)? A reader who attempts to take this sermon's lofty moral questions seriously will only be caught off-guard by these obscene ornaments.

Horace's successors continue this practice. Persius, mocking poets and audiences in his first satire, represents literary failings as sexual deviancy manifested in the body. A flamboyantly “enervated” (*fractus*, *Sat.* 1.17) reciting poet stimulates his listeners to reveal their own scandalous penetrability (ll. 19–21):

Then you can see huge Tituses shivering, their proper manners
and steady voices gone, when the poetry
enters their loins and tickles their insides.

Persius blames the current state of poetry and criticism on contemporary society's lack of “the vein of our forefather's testicles” (l. 103).

This bizarre depiction of the contemporary literary scene may illustrate an aesthetic principle (“the style is the man”; see Dessen 1968, 23–38), but Persius' sexual imagery goes beyond illustration and into (albeit often indecipherable) obscenity for its own sake. Similarly, in *Satire* 4, the satirist illustrates his subject's failure to “know himself” with descriptions of his unnaturally groomed body. The old theme of the effeminate male dominates. In the climactic image, the poem's target is told that, though he may steam and pluck his body smooth, his “little worm” will always pop out, invulnerable to the “plow” (*Sat.* 4.38–41). The *inguen obscenum* emerges again—not the ideal way for the moralist to preach self-knowledge, but effective at reproducing his titillated surprise in Persius' readers.

Satiric Interventions

The poet of hexameter satire plays Priapus in all the senses we have noted. Horace frequently uses himself as an example, to illustrate

either moral weaknesses or solutions to moral difficulties—and in the process he shines a comic light on his own behavior and body. In Satire 1.2, claiming to observe the golden mean in his own sexual choices, Horace invites readers into the bedroom, where he virtuously “fucks” (*futuo*, l. 127) a clean and available freedwoman. He then digresses into a vision of the trouble he thereby avoids—namely, performing the adulterer’s panicked flight from his lover’s husband (ll. 127–33), barefoot and half-naked. Though a counterfactual scenario, the extended vignette essentially puts the satirist in the adulterer’s place. Thus, at the end of the poem, he exchanges moral authority for comedy (Plaza 2006, 84–5).

In Satire 2.7 Horace is again drawn to comic extremes at the expense of his image as moralist: he is lectured on his own adultery and hypocrisy by his slave Davus. But even that stand-in satirist exhibits Priapus’ obscene tendencies: Davus boasts of his choice to use an ordinary prostitute to “receive the blows of my swollen tail” (l. 49) when the urge drives him. The Stoic Persius also exhibits sexuality, albeit of a more delicate variety. He recounts the vulnerable, ambiguous moment in young manhood when he could “cast my eyes at will all over the Subura” (Rome’s red-light district), but chose to begin studies with his tutor Cornutus instead (*Sat.* 5.32–6). Persius’ memory of his virtuous choice is represented with a hint of sublimated or diverted sexual desires: “[Cornutus,] you took my tender years up in your Socratic embrace/lap [*sinu*]” (ll. 36–7). Considering the erotic overtones of the real Socrates’ pedagogy as represented by his students, even if *Socraticus sinus* refers to transformative love of the good, we may regard this memory as another instance of satiric play with sexual extremes.

Satirists can appear sexually ambiguous, for instance when they aim to punish but fall short. In one poem, Satire 1.8, Horace actually speaks in the voice of a Priapus statue. He delivers what might at first look like a classic Priapic performance, targeting witches (women *and* social deviants) who come to steal bones from his cemetery-cum-garden. But, proud as this Priapus is of the “red pole projecting from [his] obscene groin” (the same phrase from *Sat.* 1.2.26), ultimately his only means of repelling the witches is to fart loudly, splitting his wooden buttocks (*Sat.* 1.8.46–7). Although successful, the god/satirist is virtually penetrated and permanently marked, emblemizing the mundaneness and messiness of bodily functions. A comparable scene in Satire 1.5 features the “real” Horace, tagging along with friends on an important diplomatic mission. At one stopping place, the poet is stood up by a girl (“stupid me”), and his bedtime erection leads to a messy wet dream (ll. 82–5). The incident may be a political metaphor (see, e.g., Reckford 1999), but it also plainly dramatizes the *sua sponte*

irruption of sexual material in serious contexts.

Where Satire Stands

The satirist plays and fantasizes as he pleases, and this qualifies satire's value as evidence about ancient norms and attitudes. Some final examples from Juvenal, the satirist who specializes in loud moral attack, will powerfully illustrate this problem. More obscene in style than his predecessors, Juvenal also dedicates three of his 16 poems more or less to sexual topics (hence the old editions of "Thirteen Satires of Juvenal" on library shelves). While these satires generally exemplify the hostile, norm-enforcing Priapic pose (Richlin 1992, 197), they also reveal the sexual, social, and moral complications inherent in the Priapic persona. Juvenal's second poem, like Horace's, begins as a diatribe on hypocrisy, a plausible-sounding moral topic ("there's no trusting appearances," *Sat.* 2.8). Taking as his prime example pretentious moralists who live secret lives of deviance, Juvenal elaborates on this paradox with colorful illustrations (e.g., ll. 11–13):

Shaggy limbs and rough bristles along your arms certainly
advertise a fierce nature, but the doctor laughs as he carves
the swollen piles from your smooth-shaven anus.

Similarly, "[these men,] while they're intoning about virtue, shake their asses" (ll. 19–21). The comic momentum builds, and the initial abstract moral complaint is soon entirely abandoned for a general attack on homosexuals. Most of Juvenal's exempla after the first third of the poem are anything but secretive: they walk around in women's clothing, engage in women's cult activities, and marry each other. It appears that the moralizing satirist's real interest is sexual transgression itself (see Nappa 1998), and his main purpose is to milk this subject for shock value and comedy (until the bitter end, when Juvenal imagines the parade of pathics confronting stunned Roman ancestors in the underworld). It is also worth noting that, by his own revelation, Juvenal is not alone in his moral position. He quotes two critics of the hypocrites, an open homosexual man (ll. 21–8) and an astute and brazen woman (ll. 36–63) whom some scholars have inferred to be a prostitute or an adulteress.⁹ The satirist has moral allies—but they are people whom his own satire elsewhere marks out on moral grounds. Thus, as often, his moral–didactic pretense is undermined.

Even when Juvenal is not posing as an angry censor, he can

produce a confusing combination of social criticism, sexual humor, and irony. Satire 9, the interview with a male prostitute, still troubles readers with its fusion of obscenity and moralism. In an amplification of the basic paradox of the sex-obsessed moralist, the prostitute Naevolus delivers a moral diatribe against a disaffected customer. This speaker mimics Juvenal's own program of social criticism and mockery, whether he is railing against the ungenerous rich (a perennial Juvenalian topic) or ridiculing effeminacy (e.g., his patron "counts up his payments, and wiggles his ass," *computat et cevet*, *Sat.* 9.40). In a more aggressive complaint directed at this absent target, he exposes uncomfortable secrets: "If I hadn't been your loyal and devoted client, your wife would still be a virgin" (ll. 70–3). The prostitute savors his past success: "my witnesses are your bed, and you yourself—who heard the sounds of the bed and the cries of its mistress" (ll. 77–8). With his Priapic boasts, his drive to expose corruption, and his nostalgic vision of a lost golden age (in this case, his own professional prime), Naevolus asserts himself as a scurrilous, sexualized satirist figure. He has the god's large and effective member (ll. 34, 43–4); Richlin (1992, 202) even sums up Naevolus' work as "rap[ing] Rome." But Naevolus also exemplifies Priapic ambiguity, having become comically unkempt and poor (*Sat.* 9.1–31).

To complicate Satire 9 further, the "real" satirist also shows up, engaging Naevolus in a dialogue that puts the prostitute's rants in a critical light. Juvenal responds to Naevolus with a mixture of sympathy (for his moral criticisms) and condescension (for his naïveté in hoping for justice). This could be a cue to view Naevolus as the satiric target, not so much *qua* prostitute as *qua* satirist, for his bitter indignation contrasts with the restrained, ironic mode Juvenal himself uses in the poem (Braund 1988, 149–70). While this metaliterary reading has appeal, it may be a mistake to assume that Juvenal would take a moral stance on Naevolus' indignation. More importantly for this discussion, it ignores one significant moral and poetic puzzle: Juvenal has chosen a prostitute to play a fellow satirist. Is this unique professional metaphor intended as pure comedy, or as commentary on the satiric agenda? In any case, it is doubtful that Juvenal would introduce such a bizarre proxy satirist without meaning for us to ponder how Naevolus' scandalous line of work might be relevant to his own (Rosen 2007, 207–35). Here, then, is a stark illustration of the way sexuality works its way into satiric poetics, whether readers choose to look for it or not.

Poetic play with sexual metaphors can probably never be amoral; it cannot, and is not meant to, drown out the moral questions and reactions that are inevitable byproducts of sexual content. The comedy and the ambiguous moral stances of Juvenal 9 do not dismiss moral

attitudes on sexuality; they provoke moral (and visceral) engagement while withholding clear judgment. Satire needs its readers to react to sexual material as such. A similar reality underlies other metaphorical uses of sexual imagery. Satirists sexualize many social conflicts and conditions, in ways that English idioms conveniently replicate: poor people get screwed, politicians are whores, obtuse literary critics suck. What the satirists do not do—and what makes Juvenal 9 even more emblematically ambiguous—is indicate how these metaphors were born, or which sphere of human behavior—sex or social relations—represents their primary concern. In other words, Juvenal could be exposing the Roman patronage system as one big sexual exchange (which would cast an interesting light on his other complaints about patrons), or suggesting that sex and sexuality are really signifiers of deeper power relations (which, though appealing, would not account for all instances of obscenity). A similar question must dog our reading of Horace's most sexual epodes: 8 and 12, which are placed alongside poems concerned with Rome's painful civil war. The poet's ruthless rage against his female addressees and his explicit detail about their physical attributes and behavior might be read as political commentary, or as an expression of Horace's poetic "impotence" (Mankin 1995, 299–301)—yet the metaphor inevitably colors our impression of sex, politics, and poetics alike. Metaphor always makes it challenging to pin down primary meanings of texts, but ancient satire has particularly fascinating ways of demonstrating the circularity of ancient moral thinking about sex.

The very utility of sexual language and imagery allows these poets to construct such imaginative satire, and allows readers to consume it with even a slight sense of moral purpose. For, just like the satirists, readers of satire claim the right to enjoy obscene content in the name of some greater purpose, whether that purpose is a stalwart defense of obscenity's rightful place in the world or a moralistic attack on deviant behaviors. And, since moral judgment affords its own pleasures, readers inclined that way might not even be able to tell which side of satire constitutes the main attraction. Do we come for the obscene content and stay for the moral insight, or vice versa? Either way, we come to resemble the *matronae* gazing at Priapus.¹⁰

Guide to Further Reading

On Greek iambic poetry, the Greek fragments of Archilochus and Hipponax are collected in West 1971. Hipponax has been subsequently edited by Degani 1991. Both poets have been translated

well into English by Gerber 1999, with facing Greek text. The Greek iambos as a poetic genre has now been exhaustively treated by Rotstein 2010. A foundational collection of essays on the Cologne Archilochus in *Arethusa* 9.2 (1976.), edited by J. Van Sickel, addresses many sexual and erotic aspects of that poem and others by Archilochus. The most recent commentary, in Italian, on the Cologne Archilochus can be found in Nicolosi 2007. The collection of essays on the iambic tradition in Cavarzere, Aloni, and Barchiesi 2002 addresses some sexual topics. Obscene sexual language in iambic poets is discussed in the course of Henderson's 1991 study of obscenity in Attic Old Comedy.

On Roman iamb, satire, and epigram, Parker 1988 offers a lively English translation of the *Priapea*, with extensive discussion. Buchheit's detailed study (Buchheit 1962) pays more attention to style. The *Priapea* is a central text in Richlin 1992, a book that brought Roman satiric genres and non-literary humor into the spotlight of Roman cultural studies. Adams 1990 uses satire and other genres to analyze Latin sexual vocabulary. Many essays in Freudenburg 2005 address sexual topics and the persona in hexameter satire, while Keane 2006 analyzes the genre's purported social functions. Of the many relevant studies of individual satirists, Bramble 1974 should be highlighted for its discussion of sexual imagery that is useful beyond the study of Persius, and Nappa 1998 for its sensitivity to Juvenal's shifting focus in his sexual invective. For thorough, up-to-date commentary on Horace's *Epodes* and on selections from Martial, see respectively Mankin 1995 and Watson and Watson 2003.

Notes

1 Defining “satire” is never easy, especially since it often functions more as a literary *mode* than as a specifically delimited genre; but, for the purposes of this chapter, we use the term to refer to poetry in which the author, in the first person, presents himself as mistreated by, and indignant at, the world. The satirist's guiding rhetorical stance therefore becomes one of blame, mockery, and invective, but it is, throughout, a predominantly comic one, despite its frequent (and ultimately ironic) claims to seriousness and didaxis. We are concerned here with Greek and Roman verse genres that fit this rhetorical definition of “satire,” if not the narrowest formal definitions (e.g., those based on the author's named influences or chosen meter)—as opposed to the many other genres that may incorporate “satirical” elements in the service of other

generic functions, which have little to do with “satire” as a specific literary project. For other attempts to define satire in classical literature and beyond, see Kernan 1959, Griffin 1994, Bogel 2001, and Rosen 2007, 17–23.

2 Satirists often thematize various social or political constraints on their freedom to attack certain individuals (often ironically, since they routinely proceed to ignore such constraints in their work), but those constraints usually have to do with specific targets rather than with obscene sexual language, which was freely deployed (though to different degrees) by all the ancient satirists. See, on Athenian satire, Reckford 1987, 460–7, Halliwell 2004, Sommerstein 2004; on Roman satire, Richlin 1992, 197–200, Freudenburg 2001, 44–51, Braund 2004.

3 All translations from Greek and Latin are our own.

4 Indeed, some in antiquity believed that Archilochus composed verses that explicitly attacked homosexuality; cf. Archil. Fr. 294 West (a quotation from the third/fourth-century bishop Eusebius), and Burnett 1983, 74–5. Hipponax' persona in his poems seems entirely heterosexual. One explicit allusion to homosexual sex involves an attack on a target, the painter Mimnes, and foreshadows similar mockery of excessive homosexual sex in Aristophanic comedy: “Mimnes, you who gape from shoulder to shoulder ...” (Μιμνῆ κατωμόχανε..., Fr. 28.1 W). See, e.g., Aristophanes' εὐρύπρωκτος (“wide-assed”), *Acharnians* 716, *Clouds* 1090.

5 The noun *menos* (“force”) is assured in the text, but only the last two letters of the adjective remain in the papyrus. Scholars have suggested *leukon* (“white”) and *thermon* (“hot”), but neither is certain.

6 Note, e.g., the several puns on the Greek word for “ass” or “buttocks”: *pugisti* in line 2, *pugelesi* in line 15.

7 Possibly referring to Bupalos, though no name is mentioned in the fragment.

8 The *Priapea* came to us attached to the manuscripts of Virgil, but there is scant ancient evidence for the collection's circulation before the early second century ce. The authorship and date remain disputed. Buchheit 1962 argues for a single author in the early second century; Parker 1988, 32–7 favors the popular multi-author theory.

9 For discussion, see Braund 1995.

10 We thank Eric Casey for his comments and suggestions on an early draft of this chapter.

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Chapter 24

Greek and Roman Ethnosexuality

Joseph Roisman

Evidence and Interpretations

It is unfortunate that the common grumbling among historians about the state of the ancient evidence is very applicable to the Greeks' and Romans' views of other people's sexuality: what will here be termed “ancient ethnosexuality.” There is little to no artistic evidence on the subject,¹ and the extant literary evidence is often based on earlier works and to a lesser extent on autopsy, with no warranty of how reliable these sources of information were.² Moreover, classical authors regarded aliens' sexual practices as only one piece (and rarely the most important one) in a greater ethnographic puzzle. For example, Herodotus' *Histories* serves as a major source for ancient ethnosexuality but seldom makes it its focus. In most cases, Herodotus surrounds the subject with other ethnographic details, such as geography, diet, religious beliefs, burial customs, and appearance, giving them an attention that suggests their greater importance to him. In this tendency, as in his reluctance to explicate alien sexuality, Herodotus resembles other Greek authors. Roman authors seem even less interested in the subject.³ We should acknowledge, then, that barbarian sexuality did not constitute an independent topic for either Greeks or Romans, and that assembling the evidence for it can turn into “cherry picking,” with all its pitfalls.

The ancient view of sexuality as an element of a larger picture had additional ramifications. It led some authors to try to match people's sexual practices with their more salient characteristics, as in the case of the nomadic Huns, who were said to copulate in wagons (Ammianus Marcellinus 3.2.10), and even in that of the imaginary Dogheads, the Indians' neighbors, who made love doggie-style—not to

mention some Indians whose semen was as dark as their skin (Ktesias, *Indica* 20–3; Herodotus 3.101). Looking at sex as part of a greater whole also opened the door to common perceptions and stereotypes of barbarians. Scholars have observed two opposing views of aliens. One treated them as living in a world that could not be more different than the author's, and hence it encouraged a focus on practices that were regarded or presented as strange and astonishing. This perspective placed the author and his audience at the geographical, moral, and cultural center of the world, associating remote barbarians with various degrees of uncivilized life and sexuality. The alternative view of barbarians idealized them for their simple, uncorrupted existence or for living a life deemed desirable by the author.⁴ These two views could share the belief that the barbarians resembled the Greeks or Romans of the past; they only differed in their evaluations of that past (for better or worst) against the present.

We must also be careful not to dissociate the information from its context, but to consider who is informing us about barbarian sex and why. In Euripides' play *Andromache*, for example, the wife of the hero Neoptolemos, Hermione, charges his Trojan concubine, Andromache, with trying to replace her as the mistress of the house. She says that Andromache is not ashamed to sleep with, and bear children to, the son of the man (Achilles) who had killed her husband (Hektor).

That is the way all barbarians are: father lies with daughter and son with mother and brother with sister, nearest kin murder each other, and there is no law to stop any of this. Do not introduce such customs into our city. For it is also not right for one man to be in charge of two women. Rather, everyone who wants to live without pain is content to look to a single mate for his bed. (Euripides, *Andromache* 155–81; trans. D. Kováčš)

Hermione appeals to the Greeks' disapproval of polygamy and incest, practices they often associated with the Persian kings (see below). Yet, as every member of the audience could tell, the venomous condemnation of barbarian customs came from an impetuous young woman with both an emotional and a practical interest in defaming her rival. Hermione is also the less sympathetic figure of the two. Indeed, later in the play *Andromache* contends that there was nothing barbarian in her conduct, or even in alien sexuality (*Andromache* 215–22; cf. 243). Of course, her assertions are just as biased as her opponent's, reminding us that the play's comments on barbarian sexuality and anti-barbarian prejudices must be taken as rhetorical arguments rather than as objective information about the Greeks.⁵

Similarly goal-directed is the fifth-century anonymous author of

Dissoi logoi (*Contrasting Speeches*), a sophist who uses ethnographic material in order to show that moral judgment is relative and dependent on locale. Apparently taking much of his information from Herodotus, he writes of Persian men who wear cosmetics and women's clothes and practice incest, and of the Lydians, who prostitute their daughters (15–16). In each case he contrasts the foreign custom with its Greek counterpart, in order to show both their differences and their equal validity. The work illustrates the range of Greek views of alien sexuality as well as the authors' selective use of ethnography. Similarly, since our ancient accounts of ethnosexuality were written exclusively by men, they can be colored by masculine conventions and perceptions.

As if the ancient evidence were not problematic enough, modern scholars have burdened it with theories that are not always helpful. While past scholarship tried to “rescue” authentic information from the texts, it is now much more common to abandon this endeavor in favor of exposing the views, stereotypes, and prejudices that shaped ancient reconstructions of barbarians and, allegedly, often distorted their portrayal beyond repair.⁶ The following examples illustrate some of the problems with such an approach to ethnosexuality.

Scholars have argued that barbarian promiscuity in Herodotus stretched over a continuum from the very wild to the civilized. At the most uncivilized end stood unbridled, animal-like sex in the open and the sharing of female partners. At a certain distance from it were peoples like the Libyan Nasamones, whose customs constrain such behavior. The Nasamones practiced polygamy and shared their women. A man indicated his union with a woman by placing a pole in front of the house. On her wedding night a bride customarily slept with any guest who brought her a gift. It was argued that the Greeks viewed the Nasamones as being more civilized than the people who copulated freely in public, because the placing of a staff limited a woman's sexual activity to one man at a time and because the sexual accessibility of the Nasamonite bride was limited to guests bearing gifts. Sex also took place indoors rather than in the open. Even more constrained were Thracian girls, who were sexually available to other men only before marriage, or Lydian girls, who prostituted themselves only to obtain sufficient dowries.⁷ Herodotus, however, makes no such fine distinctions; nor does he suggest that he follows a Greek ranking of barbarian promiscuity. On rare occasions he volunteers the opinion that sharing women in public resembles what “animals” do, but that is as far as he goes (Herodotus 1.203.2; 3.101; 4.180.5). For him, and presumably for his audience, barbarians' sexual practices and marriage were primarily different from the Greeks', not necessarily more or less “primitive.” Moreover, the claim that, in Herodotus, the

savagery of the barbarians increases with their remoteness (Rosellini and Saïd 1978) may need revision. A recent publication on Herodotus' universe suggests that Egypt appears as its center, and in one of his books Egypt is the touchstone against which other cultures, including Greek and Persian, are compared (Barker, Bouzarovski, Pelling, and Isaksen 2010). If this view is correct, we may have to re-examine the theory of a Greek (or Roman) center of high culture and civilization that marginalized and primitivized the barbarians in proportion to their distance from it.⁸

The assumption that Greeks viewed the barbarians as their opposites also informs historians who accept Edward Said's thesis of "orientalism." Described briefly, orientalism refers to the projection of western centrism, prejudices, fears, sense of superiority, and fantasies onto oriental peoples—a projection resulting in unrealistic depictions of them. In the scholarship on ancient ethnography, "orientalism" has led to a search for classical fictionalization of barbarian sexuality. For example, an important study of Greek perceptions of Egypt detects fantastic depictions of Egypt as the land of oriental sensual people, where sex was readily available (Vasunia 2001, 35–6, 82–5). The main evidence consists of two Herodotean stories, one about the Greek courtesan Rhodopis, who made a fortune in Egypt (2.134–5), and the other about an Egyptian king who prostituted his daughter because he ran out of money for his own pyramid. The princess dutifully complied but managed through a ploy to build her own pyramid (2.126). The stories may be incredible, but they are insufficient to make Herodotus an ancient Flaubert and his Egypt a place for oriental sexual fantasies, especially as Rhodopis' story involves a Greek, not an Egyptian, woman and the second tale focuses on Egyptian parenthood or is a stab at Pharaonic grandeur. Similarly, it would be wrong to dismiss Greek or Roman hostile depictions of barbarian sexual practices as inventions. A case in point is Persian incest. Greeks and Romans criticized the practice because it offended their notions of customary marriage. Of course they were judgmental; how many of us are not, especially about incest? Yet they did not invent tales of Persian incest but described a historical reality. Even their claim that the Persians found virtue in incest has been confirmed by Iranian texts.⁹

Given the wide scope and the nature of the evidence for ancient ethnosexuality, our investigation is best limited to major themes. Taking a thematic rather than a chronological approach, I will address sex in public and the sharing of women, depictions of the lustful barbarian, sexual mutilation, and sex and power. I have excluded religious or religiously inspired texts because of their special agenda, and myths and works of fiction if only because of their overt license to

invent. Space restrictions and the vast volume of material require the regrettable exclusion of such topics as marital customs, sex for sale, and (for the most part) the religious aspects of sex.¹⁰ Lastly, it must be understood that this chapter focuses on sexuality and not on gender, despite their close connections.

Sex in Public and the Sharing of Women

Greek and Roman authors described several peoples who were promiscuous and whose men shared women or had sex in public. Though such practices violated Greek and Roman notions of propriety and of limits on the sexual accessibility and reproduction of the women of the family, they were not recorded merely to denigrate the barbarians. Some authors used them to show not only the strange otherness of barbarian customs, but also their legitimate rationale, and even their positive elements.

Herodotus compares indiscriminate sex in the open—practiced by certain peoples from the Caucasus, India, and Libya—to animal sexuality. Such conduct, sometimes along with other cultural markers such as eating raw meat, or even cannibalism, suggests savagery.¹¹ Like the sharing of women (on which see more below), promiscuous sex outdoors could result in a total breakdown of the Greek and Roman rules for establishing exclusive paternity through marriage, or of other arrangements. Even worse, the inhabitants of Ierne (Ireland) were rumored to eat their dead fathers and to have sex in the open with their mothers and sisters (Strabo 4.5.4). Yet in spite of such savageries, some peoples who practiced indiscriminate, public sex solved the problem of paternity in a way that the civilized Greeks and Romans could endorse, assigning fathers to children according to physical resemblance. Hesiod's "just city," too, was blessed with children who resembled their fathers.¹² And for the philosophically minded, sex in public was not a sign of lack of civilization but an example of the relative validity of conventions among "us and them" (e.g. Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* 3.197–207).

Open sex also offended the strict Greek dichotomy between the public and the private spheres. Young, elite Mossynoecians, who dwelt on the southern shores of the Black Sea, earned Xenophon's censure as the most outlandish of the barbarians for doing things in public that the Greeks did in private, including their wish to have sex in the open with the women of Greek mercenaries who were on their way back to

Europe (*Anabasis* 5.4.32–4). Later Greek and Roman sources picked and chose from Xenophon's description elements that demonstrated the Mossynoecians' savagery and inverse world, some authors comparing their sexual habits to those of animals.¹³

Johann Bachofen (1861) theorized that unregulated sex was practiced in prehistoric times before “Amazonism,” and later matriarchy became the norm. Although his thesis has been justifiably criticized, it would be imprudent to dismiss complete sexual license as unhistorical just because it looks like an inversion of Greek practices or it is located far from the Graeco-Roman center. Lack of evidence to the contrary should allow for the possibility that the aforementioned barbarians had sex in others people's sight. After all, there is artistic and literary evidence for sex in front of onlookers among Greeks at a *sumposion* (banquet).¹⁴ The literary evidence for sex in company among Etruscans, however, is more problematic. The Greek historian Theopompos argued that the Etruscans practiced indiscriminate sex in public with women and that they reared their children in common, not knowing who their fathers were. Etruscan women exercised in the nude, and men slept with boys, prostitutes, and even wives after banquets, sometimes in private, sometimes in company. Luxury and extravagance were often associated in Greek thought with sexual deviations and effeminacy, and the source tells of male Etruscans who were comfortable playing the passive sexual partner or removing body hair, even in public.¹⁵ Although literary and artistic evidence shows Etruscans indulging themselves and sharing banquets with their wives, there is no support for their ignoring paternity or practicing public sex—with wives or anyone else. Theopompos' account may have been inspired by his fascination with the Etruscans' alterity (he keeps noting their exceptional lack of shame and their confounding of public with private), or he may have been hinting at their political and moral decline.¹⁶

There were other promiscuous barbarians who challenged paternity and traditional marriage. Herodotus writes that the Thracians allowed their female youth to sleep with whomever they wished before they married (5.6.1), and that Lydian girls prostituted themselves until they got enough money for dowries (1.93.4).¹⁷ The Massagetes, who lived around the Caspian Sea, had sex with any woman they wanted, but signaled her temporary unavailability to others by hanging a quiver on her wagon (1.126.1). We have seen that the Libyan Nasamones (who resembled the Massagetes in promiscuity) shared women, marked their sexual liaison by placing a staff before their abodes, and allowed guests bearing gifts to sleep with brides.¹⁸ Herodotus does not mention how the Thracians, the Massagetes, or the Nasamones solved the problem of paternity, but the geographer

Strabo provides one solution in his description of a similar sharing of women among the Arabs. The men of the family shared everything, including the woman of the house, although the eldest man was the family's proprietor and had the wife for the night. The other men placed a staff before the door, to warn their brothers that they were having sex with her. This led to incestuous relationships, but also to the brotherhood of all male children. Adultery was defined as having sex outside the family (Strabo 16.4.25). In most of the cases listed above, men appear as the beneficiaries or controllers of female sexual accessibility. Strabo, however, adds a tale about an Arab princess who grew tired of her brothers' sexual demands and made staffs resembling theirs, which she put in front of her door to make them think she was sleeping with one of them (16.4.25). Although her ploy was discovered, the story shows an awareness of the price paid by women in a society where men claimed sexual privileges. Conversely, the women of the Gindanes in Libya wore anklets to mark each time they slept with a man, and the one who had the most anklets was considered the best, for being loved by the greatest number of men (Herodotus 4.176). (It probably helped if she also had long legs.) Herodotus' story about the Gindanes, however, is exceptional in that it puts women at its center, even though it was masculine desire that ultimately made them "the best." He is also non-judgmental about the aforementioned cases of sharing women and does not measure societies by a ruler of barbarity. Moreover, it is possible that some of the practices he recorded were wholly or partially authentic rather than invented by him or his sources.¹⁹

Julius Caesar ranks the barbarians of Britain on a civilization scale but spares them further judgment. He regards the Britons of Kent as the most civilized on the island and finds the rest less so because of their lack of agriculture, their diet, their appearance, and their family arrangements. Among the less civilized, 10 to 12 men shared one woman, especially if they were brothers or parents and children, and the paternity of the children was assigned to the man who had married the wife when she was a virgin (Caesar, *Gallie War* 5.14). It is unlikely that Caesar made up this account, and he is not overtly critical of these sexual arrangements.²⁰

Although unrestricted sex in the open, or with shared women in private, offended Greek and Roman sensibilities, it is noteworthy that some authors could find positive elements in the practice. According to Herodotus, unrestricted sex with women made all the Scythian Agathyrsi relatives and eliminated jealousy and animosity among them. Implicitly, the historian acknowledges the negative consequences of adhering to the traditional institutions of family and private property, although the scholarly view that his account reflects

Greek utopian ideas is contradicted by the Agathyrsi's other, less than admirable qualities.²¹ Diodorus' description of the Ichthyophagi ("Fish-Eaters"), who lived in Carmania and Gedrosia, is similarly mixed. They walked naked and, like cattle, traveled in herds, shared women and children, and found food in common and from the earth. But they also satisfied all their needs—such as for food, drink, and sex—locally instead of importing goods and pleasures (Diodorus Siculus 3.15.1–2, 17.1–5). This made the Ichthyophagi free of the corrupting influence of imported luxury and pleasure, although they were closer to the model of simple savages than to that of noble ones.²² In short, authors who reported on barbarian promiscuity and its consequences did not necessarily have an agenda or a ready-made model to shape their views; nor, presumably, did their readers.

The Lustful Barbarian?

Edith Hall has suggested in her valuable book on barbarians in Greek tragedy that the failure to control sexual desire "appears to have been a standard trait of the barbarian male in Greek writers ..."²³ The evidence, however, offers a more complex picture. There are indeed authors who portray Persian kings as consumed by passion, or who make sexual desire account for barbarian polygamy and incest (on this, more below), but otherwise lust plays a limited role in depictions of barbarian sexuality. Moreover, a tendency to find barbarians lustful is commoner among Roman writers and Greek writers of the Roman era than among their Greek predecessors.

It is noteworthy that no author who describes barbarian sex in the open and the sharing of women ties these practices to masculine lust. Even classical Greek drama is not very supportive of the stereotype of the amorous barbarian. The Thracian king in Sophocles' lost *Tereus* rapes his wife's sister Philomela and then cuts out her tongue to silence her, but his barbarity lies not in his infatuation but in his maltreatment of her (Sophocles Frr. 580–95b Radt). Similarly, in a seduction scene in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae* (esp. ll. 1173–230), the Scythian archer's passion is heterosexually universal before it is alien.²⁴ There is, to be sure, Menander's comic Thracian who confesses that the Thracian Getaans are incontinent, a trait that accounts for their having many wives (Frr. 577–78 = Strabo 7.3.4). "Lydians at noon" was a Greek saying that referred to an excessive sexual indulgence at the "wrong" time of the day (T. Long 1986, 140–1, 190 n. 16), and Diodorus describes the shameless Celts, who ignore their beautiful women in favor of raving homosexual romps (5.32.7–8;

compare Athenaeus 13.603a). But there is no shortage of writings that seem to contradict such images. The Hippocratic author of the *Airs, Waters, and Places* describes one group of Scythians who lacked libido and were largely infertile (18–22; see 38–9). Self-controlled barbarians, often philosophers, avoided lovemaking, and Strabo, probably basing his account on Megasthenes, reports ascetic Indian wise men who lived frugally, avoided sex, and taught their male and female students abstinence (15.1.59–60). The Greek Stoic philosopher Poseidonios discovered, among the Thracians, men who shunned female company, revered gods, and were greatly honored for these habits (Strabo strongly disputes his findings: 7.3.3–4). Nor were barbarian women notorious for their lustfulness. Against Ktesias, who claims that the Persian King Cambyses wanted to marry an Egyptian woman because of the amorous reputation of her countrywomen (in Athenaeus 13.560d–e), there is Euripides' Andromache, who suggests that female desire for sex was universal (Euripides, *Andromache* 220–2; compare Herodotus 1.4). Even Arrian's comment that the only way to seduce Indian women was to give them the very expensive gift of an elephant suggests their incorruptibility by other means (*Indica* 17; see, however, Strabo 15.1.54).

Roman imperial authors were readier to identify lust among the non-Romans. The satirist Juvenal describes a Greek whose desire left no one safe: not the lady of the house, her virgin daughter, her son, her son-in-law, or even the grandmother. But it is hard to untangle the Greek's lust from his no less stereotypical sneakiness and lack of scruples (Juvenal, *Satires* 3.109–14; Williams 1999, 64–72). Ammianus Marcellinus finds unrestrained passion among the Saracenes (14.4.4), the Gothic Taefalians (31.9.6: for boys; see Sergent 1986, 477–82), and the Parthians/Persians (23.6.76; cf. also Justin 41.3 and Lucian, *Pharsalia* 8.422–7). Not accidentally, these were current or recently defeated enemies of Rome, and their depictions followed the old ethnographic model of barbarians who stand for anti-civilization and whose sexuality is just one manifestation of their character, but not the most telling one. But Roman authors also take notice of chaste barbarians. Julius Caesar thought that the Germans were promiscuous because men and women bathed together half naked in the river. He noted their meager use of agriculture, which was a sure sign of lack of civilization; but then he reports that they equated excellence and physical prowess with abstinence and disciplined life, believing (as the Greeks and the Romans did) that sexual activity weakened the body (Caesar, *Gallie War* 6.21).²⁵ Less ambivalent were writers who used barbarians as a positive counterpart to corrupt Rome. One such barbarian was the Etruscan and very handsome young Spurrinna. In contrast to Theopompos' sex-

crazed Etruscans, this young man, in an exemplary act of *fides* (good faith) and *pudicitia* (chastity), disfigured his own face in order to quell the desire of Etruscan women and the ire of their families (Valerius Maximus 4.5 ext.; Sordi 1995, 166–7). The wife of a Galatian chief earned the praise of several authors for declining the advances of a lustful Roman centurion. After he had raped her, she cleverly plotted his death and spent the rest of her life living chastely with her husband.²⁶ Explicitly or implicitly, authors of the imperial era utilize barbarians to criticize the Romans on their immorality. In Cassius Dio's history of Rome (62.6.4), the British Queen Boudica exhorts her subjects to rebel against Rome by describing the Romans as slavish to their appetites, which included pederasty, as well as to a bad lyre player (Nero). Tacitus produced the most praiseworthy depiction of morally strict barbarians as a critical foil to depraved Rome. Admitting that German women bared their breasts, he hastens to assure the reader that the Germans were mostly monogamous and that even the polygamists among them differed from other barbarians in that they did not marry for lust. The Germans also had effective social mechanisms for ensuring their wives' fidelity and chastity. Perhaps, as has been argued, Tacitus' Germans were modeled on ideal Romans of the past. In any case, he and other authors are clear evidence against a monolithic ancient model of lustful barbarians.²⁷

A measure of agreement about overly passionate barbarians existed, however, when sexual desire was associated with what the Greeks identified as a luxurious and indulgent lifestyle (*truphē*). Such a life violated the Greco-Roman ideal of masculine self-control because it could lead to licentiousness, effeminate behavior, hubristic conduct, and even polygamy and incest.²⁸ Theopompos' depiction of Etruscan sexual activities, including their use of pre-adolescent naked maids as attendants, their pursuit of boys, and their shaving of bodily hair, were all tied to their luxuriousness (Athenaeus 12.517d–f). Persian royalty and other eastern kings, as well as Lydians, provided more notorious examples of *truphē* evincing Greek moral concepts more than any ethnographical knowledge.²⁹

Tales of Persian kings, too, read as cases of scandalous lack of self-control. The Greek historian Ktesias, for example, ties the origins of the war between the Persian King Cambyses and Egypt to his sexual desire and excessive infatuation. Cambyses asked the king of Egypt for his daughter in marriage because he heard that Egyptian women were very passionate. Concerned that Cambyses would turn his daughter into a concubine, the Egyptian king sent him instead the daughter of his murdered rival. Cambyses fell madly in love with the woman, who persuaded him to take vengeance upon Egypt.³⁰ Ktesias is not alone in explaining events by appealing to royal lust instead of through

strategic considerations and Persian customs. A similar ignorance of Persian sexual politics and culture led ancient authors to ascribe royal incest marriages to the king's desire. Persian kings married their sisters, and even their daughters, for a variety of reasons, including the wish to limit the number of first claimants to the throne and to mark the special status of the royal family and the belief that the issue of such marriages would excel others in virtue and dignity. For Greeks and Romans, however, Persian incest—in court, among the Magi, or, by extension, among all Persians—was rooted in self-indulgence and in a search for sexual pleasure.³¹

Polygamy, which sometimes distinguished barbarians from the more civilized Greeks and Romans, was also associated with desire. Herodotus implies a link between the Persians' search for pleasure (including pederasty, which they supposedly learned from the Greeks) and their acquiring many wives and concubines (1.135). A more explicit link is suggested by the comic poet Menander's allusion to the Thracians (Frr. 547–8), by Cicero's to the Persians and Assyrians (*In Verrem* 3.2.33; see *Tusculanae disputationes* 5.7.20), and by Lucian's (*Pharsalia* 8.422–47) and Justin's (41.3) to the Parthians. In these and other examples, polygamy connoted holding women, and especially monogamous wives, in low regard. Yet the relation between polygamy and desire, or even barbarity, was not automatic. A number of authors describe polygamy without suggesting that it sprang from masculine lust, or even that it was uncivilized.³² Aristotle regarded Thracians as barbarians, but he ascribed their polygamy to their surplus of women rather than to lust (Arist. Fr. 611 Rose). Strabo (15.3.17), perhaps inspired by Herodotus' report that having many sons was a mark of manliness in Persia (1.136), says that the purpose of Persian polygamy and concubinage was to acquire many children and that the king rewarded prolific fathers. He similarly suggests that the Indian Brahmin philosophers were polygamous because they strove to create a large pool of children from whom to recruit worthy successors or servants in the absence of slaves (Strabo 15.1.59; compare 15.1.54). The functional justification of polygamy recurs in Diodorus' attribution of Egyptian polygamy to the wish to have many children, who would contribute to the land's prosperity (1.80.3). According to Roman authors, pragmatic considerations also guided elite polygamy among Germans and Moors, who sought social and political alliances (Tacitus, *Germania* 18; Sallust, *Jugurthine War* 80.6). The Greek historian Dinon even suggested that the Persian queen benefited from the large number of royal concubines who honored her (Athenaeus 13.556b). Finally, the complex classical view of polygamy is well illustrated by the Roman historian Ammianus Marcellinus, who thought that the Persians had many wives and concubines for

pleasure, but who resisted the stereotypical link connecting polygamy, lust, and luxury by stressing that the Persians shunned luxurious banquets and were manly in spite of their feminine appearance (23.6.76).³³

It should be noted that, while classical authors were critical of barbarian lust, they rarely portrayed it as a threat to Greek or Roman women.³⁴ On the other hand they reported stories, some of questionable ethnographic or historical value, about barbarians who were victimized by lustful Greeks and Romans. The Tarentines in southern Italy, who were steeped in effeminate luxury and hubris, allegedly forced captured Iapygian boys, maids, and beautiful women into local temples, stripped them naked, and raped them in public to satisfy their desire. The gods punished them for their crimes (Athenaeus 12.522d–e; see 12.541c–e). Ktesias tells of the Greek physician Apollonides at the Persian court, who fell in love with princess Amytis and persuaded her that the remedy for her illness was to sleep with him. Although Ktesias says that the woman was too fond of male company, he does not portray her as a sex-starved barbarian. She is depicted as the victim of a deceitful Greek who took advantage of his patient, and Ktesias suggests that Apollonides deserved the harsh punishment inflicted on him by the king (*Persica* 32). The aforementioned Galatian woman who was raped by a Roman centurion, along with other virtuous foreign women who killed themselves rather than be violated (Valerius Maximus 6.1.1–3) and the beautiful Iberian captive women whom the gallant Scipio protected from their presumably Roman guards (Polybius 10.18–19), all show that the threat of manly lust came not from barbarian but from civilized lands.

Sexual Mutilation

The ancients' interest in ethnosexuality had much to do with its real or presumed strangeness. In this section I shall deal with one such perceived oddity: the mutilation of sexual organs.

For the ancients, sexual mutilation was firmly associated with the East. Greeks and Romans were familiar with Egyptian circumcision, and they often traced the practice among other peoples, especially Jews, to Egyptian origin or influence.³⁵ The Egyptians also practiced female “circumcision,” apparently by mutilating the clitoris, but classical authors did not consider it a reproachable physical deformity, like male circumcision.³⁶ It was probably against the view of circumcision as a superstition (e.g. Strabo 16.2.37) that the Jewish

intellectual Philo of Alexandria came out in defense of Jewish male circumcision (*Quaestiones in Genesim* 3.47). Philo relates the practice to divine wisdom, which aims to restrain and humble men, who by nature are more passionate and active than women and who take excessive pride in their greater contribution to the creation of male children. Philo even recommends circumcising the intellect in order rid it of empty thoughts. (If only it were that simple!) His exegesis has little ethnographic value but rationalizes a religious custom on the basis of classical ideas of gender.

Castration was an extreme form of sexual mutilation that the Greeks readily attributed to the Persians, who either employed eunuchs or eunuchized others as a punishment.³⁷ Although Greeks and Romans generally abhorred the practice, they were not of one mind about it. The prevailing attitude can be gleaned from Herodotus' story about the Chian Panonios, who bought and castrated beautiful young boys and then sold them as eunuchs to barbarians. Just retribution came when he fell into the hands of one his victims who, having become a high official in the Persian Empire, ordered Panonios and his sons to castrate each other. Herodotus calls Panonios' trade "most unholy" (8.104–6). Both Xenophon (*Cyropaedia* 7.5.59–66) and Tacitus (*Annales* 6.31.3) suggest that eunuchs were held universally in contempt, except by barbarians (see Euripides, *Orestes* 1528). This disapproval had much to do with the view of the castrated as an effeminate and sexually submissive person, whom only barbarians would place in positions of power and influence. The Roman historian of Alexander, Q. Curtius Rufus, saves particularly nasty words for the depiction of the Persian eunuch Bagoas, who was the lover of Darius III, and then of Alexander. He describes him as womanish, scheming, and leading a disgraceful life, and he charges him with using Alexander's sexual attraction to destroy his (Bagoas') personal enemies. In the course of Bagoas' feud with the Persian governor Orsines, Curtius put in Orsines' mouth statements that reflect his readers' view of eunuchs in power. The noble Persian calls Bagoas a whore (*scrota*) and a violator of Persian norms for allowing himself to be used like a woman; Orsines then ranks Bagoas as inferior to women when Orsines declares that once there were female rulers in Asia, but now it was ruled by a eunuch.³⁸

Conversely, Greek authors acknowledged that eunuchs made trustworthy servants and were useful to their employers (Herodotus 8.104; Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 7.5.59–66). Diodorus reports castration among the Troglodytes for the sake of its difference rather than as a criticism (3.23.2, 33.7). Some authors show pity for the castrated. Ammianus Marcellinus' derisive depiction of the retinue of distinguished ladies in imperial Rome includes laments on the

physiognomy of their eunuchs and blames Semiramis, the supposed inventor of castration, for violating nature (14.6.17). Pity is also conspicuous in Lucian's description of the priests of the goddess Cybele, the Galli, who practiced self-castration in her honor. Moreover, her adherents are said to imitate the honorable example of a man who castrated himself rather than yield to the charms of his seductive queen (Lucian, *De dea Syria* 19–27; cf. e.g., Ovid, *Fasti* 4.179–246). The praise of this proto-Origen suggests that castration resulted in the highly valued virtue of self-control.³⁹

Sex and Power

One need not be a Foucauldian to acknowledge a strong link between sexuality and power in ancient representations of barbarians. It appears in depictions of barbarian self-indulgence and *hubris* on the one hand, and, on the other, in stories about foreign women who, as we have seen, defended their virtue against Greek or Roman captors. In this section I shall deal with selected aspects of the nexus of barbarian culture, sex, and power.

Classical sources report on foreign rulers whose power and authority enabled to enjoy sexual privileges outside the household, legitimately or not. A legitimate example was the king of the Libyan Adrymachides, who according to Herodotus had *ius primae noctis* with the brides of his subjects (4.172.2). Diegylis, king of the Thracian Caenians in the second century bce, could earn a deserved spot at the other end of the spectrum. According to Diodorus' semi-pornographic depiction of his savagery, Diegylis prostituted and abused free boys and women, dismembered guests and enemies, cut and exchanged their male and female private parts, and even indulged in human sacrifice. The Thracian ruler must have had bitter enemies to earn such a reputation. Yet, as in many other cases of barbarian sexuality, it was his character rather than his ethnicity that accounted for his barbarity, and his sexual abuse alone did not define his tyranny. Thus his son, who was a true heir to his father's cruelty, failed to replicate his sexual perversion (Diodorus Siculus 33.12–15).⁴⁰

The link between power and sex is prominent in cases where barbarian and Greek sexual cultures collide. One tale that demonstrates the superiority of Greek values and propriety over those of the Persians' tells the story of Aspasia of Phocaea in Ionia (to be distinguished from her famous namesake and Pericles' companion). This charming concubine had a highly successful career as a beloved companion—first of the Persian prince Cyrus the Younger, who

rebelled against his king brother, Artaxerxes II; then of the king himself; and even briefly of his son Darius—before Artaxerxes made her a priestess. Aspasia was a historical figure, but the stories about her encounters with all three potentates were embellished almost beyond recovery. They are a good source, however, for classical depictions of conflicts between Greek and Persian sexual norms.

Aelian (Claudius Aelianus), a Greek author of the Roman imperial era, provides the most detailed and literary version of how Aspasia became the preferred consort of Cyrus the Younger.⁴¹ He makes Aspasia resemble an ideal Greek woman in her conduct before and after she became Cyrus' favorite lover. She was a beautiful young woman who was compelled to join Cyrus' feast, but, unlike other female companions, who made their beauty their vocation and were eager to please him sexually, Aspasia was unadorned, modest, and rejected his petting and kisses. The author suggests that yielding to him was un-Greek and tantamount to servility. Naturally, Cyrus grew more excited, and the author makes him validate the superiority of her standards by declaring that Aspasia was free and uncorrupted, whereas the other women were essentially prostitutes. In short, Greek chastity prevailed over a Persian environment that demanded its opposite. The two protagonists fell in love with each other—a development that distinguishes Aspasia's status from Cyrus' other objects of desire—and their relationship resembled “Greek marriage in harmony [*homonia*] and moderation [*sōphrosunē*]”—probably more *de facto* than *de iure*.

Aelian provides more examples of Aspasia's virtues. These include her devotion to her partner and to her father, and even her “unwomanlike” rejection of jewelry and expensive gifts. Following Cyrus' death in battle against Artaxerxes II in 401 bce, Aspasia was taken to the king, who became inflamed with love with her, although it took time until loyal Aspasia reciprocated.

It may seem unfair to criticize Aelian's romantic account for ignoring the realities of war and politics in Persia, but his focus on Aspasia reverses the power structure at court. However spellbinding she may have been, it was she who depended on her lovers rather than vice versa. Aelian highlights Artaxerxes' (and Cyrus') passion for her in accordance with the stereotype of the amorous Persian dynast. Yet there was more to Artaxerxes' conduct than love. Possessing another man's concubines signaled his defeat and loss of power, and it is likely that Aspasia attracted the king no less with her beauty than with her fame as the chief concubine of the once-rebellious Cyrus.⁴² In this sense Aspasia was a token of royal victory, and the decline in her status is suggested by Artaxerxes' rather kinky treatment of her in another episode told by Aelian (*Varia historia* 12.1). Artaxerxes' lover

and eunuch died, and the king is said to have been in such pain over the loss that no one dared approach him. Aspasia, however, volunteered to console him, and the king came to her quarters and dressed her in the dead eunuch's cloak. Aspasia kept visiting the king dressed like the eunuch until his pain subsided. Aelian presents the affair as one more victory for Aspasia over men and as a show of her devotion to her partners—tactfully leaving to the reader's imagination what went on during the visits.

Plutarch, who tells the rest of Aspasia's story, shows a similar lack of awareness of the politics of concubinage in Persia. He reports on a competition between Artaxerxes' two sons, Ochus and Darius, over who would inherit the old man's throne. Ochus had an ally in Queen Atossa, and rumor had it that he slept with her and promised to marry her once he became king. Darius, however, won his father's approval and was proclaimed the designated heir. In this capacity he was entitled to make a request of the king who, by custom, could not refuse. When Darius asked for Aspasia, the king's favorite, Artaxerxes was much displeased. He decided to give Aspasia the right to choose between him and Darius and, surprisingly, she picked the son. Incensed, the king gave her to him, but then took her back and made her a priestess in Ecbatana. Resentful, Darius would later be executed for a plot against the throne (Plutarch, *Artaxerxes* 26–7).

Plutarch's conflict of passions is inseparable from what was in essence a power struggle at court. With Ochus having the queen for an ally, Darius had to settle for second best: a famed royal concubine. Plutarch cannot understand why the king, who had a beloved wife, Atossa, and 360 concubines, could not spare a single woman for his son. Yet his possessiveness was a protective measure against other men who might use concubines as visible proof of their assumption of power and, possibly, superior manliness. By taking a concubine who was known to have been the darling of both Cyrus and the king, Darius buttressed his right to the throne but also undermined Artaxerxes' position and prestige. The king's diplomatic solution was to make Aspasia, now no longer a young woman, a priestess, and hence unavailable to anyone. The act also suggests that he was not as strongly attached to her as the source surmised.⁴³

Another story that similarly ranks Graeco-Roman sexual mores above those of the barbarians involves of the Carthaginian Sophonisba. She was the beautiful daughter of the Carthaginian general Hasdrubal, who married or betrothed her first to the Numidian leader Masinissa and then to his Numidian rival, Syphax. Sophonisba was said to have influenced Syphax to transfer his alliance from Rome to Carthage during the Second Punic War. What happened next has been described by many ancient authors, but the Roman

historian Livy's version is surely the most elaborate.⁴⁴

Livy, who is unaware of Sophonisba's earlier relationship with Masinissa, describes how Masinissa found her in Syphax's palace after the latter's defeat and surrender to the Roman general Scipio (Africanus Senior). Sophonisba entrusted her fate to Masinissa, but begged him to kill her rather than surrender her to the Romans. The Numidians were allegedly prone to act on their desires, and Masinissa was no exception. Unable to resist her beauty and charms, he pledged to save her and married her on the spot, to rescue her from the Romans. This greatly upset Laelius, Scipio's right-hand man, who tried to drag her by force from the bedroom; but Masinissa prevailed upon him to leave the decision to Scipio.

The story then moves to a meeting between Scipio and Syphax. Syphax blamed his change of alliance from Rome to Carthage on Sophonisba, who with words and embraces brought madness into his house and unbalanced his mind toward opposition to his former friends. His consolation was that she was now corrupting his bitter enemy Masinissa, whose marriage to her showed greater folly and lack of self-control than did Syphax's own. Scipio, who is nauseatingly self-righteous and proper here, as in most other sources, then confronted Masinissa. The Roman asserted his superior masculinity when he praised his own self-restraint and continence (*temperamentia et continentia*) and described bodily pleasures as the greatest danger to men. He then told the Numidian that it was up to Rome to decide the fate of this dangerous woman, and Masinissa repented. In rather cowardly fashion, he sent a slave to Sophonisba with a poison, telling her that, although powerless, he was at least keeping his promise not to surrender her to the Romans. Sophonisba's parting words in Livy are painfully ironic. She called the poison a wedding gift, and one that was not unwelcome if her husband could give her nothing better, adding: "Tell him that I would have died better if I had not married at my funeral." Then she courageously drank the cup of poison.

Sophonisba has inspired generations of poets, painters, and playwrights to rewrite her story. She did indeed cut a tragic figure, if only because she was a victim of a power struggle among four men, each using her to attain his ends and to upstage the others. At first her father used her to create and break alliances with rival Numidian leaders. She was a willing participant in promoting Carthaginian interests, but she also became a bone of contention among Syphax, Masinissa, and Scipio. Syphax won her from Masinissa, but when the Romans and Masinissa won the war the latter retaliated by retaking her from Syphax. Then Scipio intervened, regarding Sophonisba as a Roman possession. He first reproached Syphax, who aptly appealed to the Roman stereotype of the Numidians as faithless and governed by

lust in order to justify his change of allegiance at the behest of his alluring wife (see Polybius 14.7.6). Later Scipio, who regarded Masinissa's marriage as an act of unwarranted independence, resolved to teach him who was the real victor and what it meant to be a Roman client. Masinissa's admission to Sophonisba that he was powerless showed that he had learned the lesson. The story of Sophonisba, then, was about a woman who was a pawn in a contest for superiority among men.

Conclusion

An important book on Greek sexuality states that “Greek ‘ethnography,’ in fact, can be understood only in the context of the desires and fears of those who composed it” (Keuls 1985, 321; but see Dewald 1981, 103–6). I hope I have shown in this chapter that Greek and Roman ethnosexuality includes much more than projecting emotions and cognitive constructs onto aliens. Classical authors were certainly biased, but they could also be understanding and often non-judgmental about the practices they described. It is time to stop condemning them for presenting fantasies as truths, and to give them credit for informing us, sometimes accurately, about alien sexuality.

Guide to Further Reading

Unlike the much discussed sexualities of Greeks and Romans, those of ancient non-Greeks and non-Romans are underrepresented in modern scholarship. Unintentionally, we thus replicate ancient authors' marginalization of this fascinating field. Müller 1972 has done much of the groundwork of collecting the evidence on ancient ethnography, including aliens' sexuality. Rosellini and Saïd 1978, Dewald 1981, and Saïd 1985 (cf. Pembroke 1967) identified ancient constructs of barbarian sexuality, which, however, should not be rigidly applied to the evidence; and see generally Gruen 2011. Rollinger and Ulf 2000, 2006, and Ulf and Rollinger 2002 have rescued the topic from semi-oblivion and include the most recent analyses of selected aspects of ethnosexuality.

Notes

- 1 The so-called Eurymedon vase (Hamburg, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe 1981, 173) that describes a Greek about to bugger an archer in a barbarian attire is primarily informative on Greek sexuality.
- 2 For the problems of evaluating ancient ethnography, see Woolf 2011, esp. 263–5.
- 3 The following are representative examples. For the scarcity of barbarian sexuality in Greek Comedy, see Long 1986, 11. According to Rollinger 2000, 188–93, only 10.3% of the material in the Roman Pomponius Mela's book of world geography deals with marriage and gender, the subjects closest to ours.
- 4 See, e.g., Romm 1992, 45–9; Bichler 2000, 32.
- 5 See, however, Hall, 1989, 188, but also Schmal 2000; cf. Bacon 1961, 146.
- 6 See, e.g. Pembroke 1967; Rollinger 2000, 189, 210 n. 2.
- 7 E.g. Nipple 2001, 285, based on earlier scholarship. Unbridled sex: Herodotus 1.203.2; 3.101.1; 4.180.5–6. “Restricted sex:” 4.172.2; 5.6; 1.93.4.
- 8 Gruen 2011 was published after this chapter had already been written. It was gratifying to discover the similarities in our reading of ancient ethnography.
- 9 See de Jong 1997, 329–31, who nevertheless belittles the contribution of classical texts to our knowledge of ancient Iran. Questioning orientalism: Scheidel 2009, 278–9; Llewellyn-Jones and Robson 2010, esp. 84–5.
- 10 See, e.g., Budin 2008, who argues against the historicity of sacred prostitution in ancient Greece and the Middle East.
- 11 Herodotus, 1.203.2; 3.101; 4.180.5; cf. Strabo 15.1.56. Saïd 1985, 138–41.
- 12 Hesiod, *Works and Days* 234–5, and, for Rome, see e.g. Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 2.5. Paternity by resemblance to fathers: the Libyan Auses (Herodotus 4.180.5); the African Garamentes (Mela 1.45; but, according to Solin, to mothers: 30.2); the Illyrian Liburni (Nicolaus of Damascus 90 Fr. 103).
- 13 Diodorus of Sicily 14.30.7; Apollodorus, *Argonautica* 2.1015–29 (like swines); Artemidorus 1.8 (like dogs); Mela 1.106–7. Strabo 12.3.18, however, ignores their sexual habits. See Ruffing 2002, 255.
- 14 E.g. [Demosthenes], *Against Neaera* 59.33; The Pedieus Painter Louvre G13 = ARV 86, a.

15 Theopompos in *FGrH* 115 F 204 = Athenaeus 13.571f–518a; cf. Aristotle in Athenaeus 1.23d; Herakleides Pontikos 2.217; Herakleides Lembos, *Excerpta politica* 44.

16 Kistler 2002; Flowers 1994, 191; and generally Liébert 2006.

17 Cf. *Dissoi logoi* 2.12 on Macedonian maids.

18 Herodotus 4.172.2; cf. Pomponius Mela 1.46 on the African Augilaeans and Diodorus Siculus 5.181.1 on the Balearics.

19 Pace Rosellini and Saïd 1978, 969–70; Saïd 1985, 139. Possibly historical practices: Pembroke 1967, 11–15. For the Thracian girls, see Kotova 2000, 22–5. On the sexual practices of Illyrian Liburni—Nicolaus of Damascus 90 Fr. 103; Pseudo-Scylax, *Periplus* 21; Varro, *De re rustica* 2.10.9–10—and their likely historicity, see Wilkes 1992, 186–7.

20 Equally non-judgmental of sharing women and children, or recording the practice for curiosity's sake, are Diodorus on the Ethiopian Hylophagians (3.24) and Diodorus (3.32.1–33.7) and Strabo (16.4.17) on the Troglodytes on the shores of the Red Sea. Cassius Dio's Caledonians are a mixture of savagery and masculine prowess (77.12.1–4). The Roman Mela, however, brings the Troglodytes close to the animal kingdom (1.44).

21 Herodotus 4.104; cf. Nicolaus of Damascus 90 F 104 on the Galactophagoi. For utopian ideas, see Bichler 2000, 30. Ivantchik 2011, which demonstrates Herodotus' great accuracy in describing Scythian funeral rites, is a cautionary note for those who regard his Scythian tales a cultural construct.

22 Saïd (1985, 142–8) detects Cynic influence in Diodorus' account, but Diodorus seems to follow a theory that links peoples' culture to their climate and geography (3.33.7). Arrian, *Indica* 27.2, 33.3 notes the Ichthyophagi's semi-bestial conduct, but he says nothing on their sex life and lack of families.

23 Hall 1989, 126; see 113, 136.

24 Pace Long 1986, 106–7.

25 For Caesar' German ethnography and its political and ethnohistorical background, see Riggsby 2006, 47–71; Krebs 2011, 206–7.

26 Polybius 21.38; Livy 38.24.2–9; Plutarch, *Mulierum virtutes* 258e; Valerius Maximus 6.1, ext. 2. For other chaste non-Roman women, see Valerius Maximus 6.1.1–3; Plutarch, *Mulierum virtutes* 257f–8c.

27 Tacitus, *Germania* 17–19; cf. Horace, *Carmina* 3.24.17–24 for a similar view of Scythian women; Langlands 2006, 320–7.

28 See Kurke 1992 for *habrosunē* as an archaic concept of luxuriousness that, like *truphē*, was believed to migrate from the

barbarians to the Greeks, especially the Ionians. *Habrosunē* had sexual associations, but there is no direct evidence that the Greeks' borrowings included barbarian sexuality.

29 E.g. Diodorus Siculus 2.23.1–4 on the Assyrian king Sardanapallus, or Xanthus of Sardis on the Lydians and their king, see Athenaeus 12.515d–16c.

30 Ktesias 688 Fr. 13a = Athenaeus 13.560d–e. Herodotus' not dissimilar version misses the sexual elements (3.1). See Lenfant 2009, 149–50.

31 Sex and royal incest: Herodotus 3.31; Ktesias in *FGrH* 688 Frr. 44a–b; Plutarch, *Artaxerxes* 23.2–4; Lucan, *Pharsalia* 8.422–47 (the Parthian king); and see Brosius 1996, esp. 35–69, but also Ogden 1999, 125–7. Sex and incest among Magi: Xanthos of Lydia, in *FGrH* 765 F 31; Strabo 15.3.20. For sex and Persian incest, see Antisthenes in Athenaeus 5.220c; also de Jong 1997, 424–32. For other incestuous barbarians, see Strabo 6.4.25 (Arabs); Strabo 5.4.5 (Ireland, possibly); Diodorus of Sicily 1.27.1 (Egyptians), cf. Pausanias 1.7.1. See also Ager 2005, 2–3.

32 E.g. Herodotus 5.5 (Thracian Crestonians); Aristobulos in *FGrH* 139 F4 (Indians); Strabo 15.1.55 (Indian kings); Mela 1.42 (Libyans); Solin 22.12–15 (Hibridians).

33 Scheidel 2009 attributes polygamy to a Darwinian wish to monopolize procreation. His theory cannot be easily applied to cases of shared women.

34 One exception, however, is a story in Herodotus, of dubious historicity, about Persian envoys to the Macedonian court (c. 510 bce?), who were killed by prince Alexander I for molesting the royal wives and concubines (5.18–21). It was the Persians' power that allowed them to be licentious and offensive. For doubts about the tale, see Sprawski 2010, 136–7.

35 Strabo 17.2.5; Diodorus Siculus 1.28.3, 55.5, cf. Herodotus 4.102.4; Strabo 16.4.9 (the Ethiopian Creophagi); Diodorus Siculus. 3.32.3 (Troglydites).

36 For female “circumcision,” see Strabo 17.2.5; Philo, *Quaestiones in Genesim* 3.47. For views on male circumcision, see Feldman 1993, 153–8. For *infamia ignorata*, I copy the note of Horace Leonard Jones, Strabo's translator in the Loeb Classical Library, on female excision: “The operation is harmless, and analogous to that of circumcision” (1930, vol. 7: 153 n. 2).

37 E.g. Herodotus 3.97, 6.9.32. Homeric characters also punished by castration: *Odyssey* 18.85–7, 22.274. Employing eunuchs, male or female, also marked Persian and Lydian *truphē*: Athenaeus 12.514d–e.

38 Curtius Rufus 10.1.22–38. See also Plato, *Laws* 695A–B. For orientalism and Greeks on eunuchs, see Hall 1989, 156–7. For Romans' employment of and attitudes toward eunuchs, see J. Long 1996, esp. 93–4 and 104–16. Of course, not all Persian officials or royal lovers were eunuchs, or all eunuchs lacking in masculine vigor: e.g. Polybius 22.22.1–5. See Llewellyn-Jones 2002.

39 According to the Hippocratic author of *Airs, Waters, Places* 18–22, the Scythian Anarieis (who were not castrated) lost their virility and turned effeminate, just like eunuchs. The author contests the Scythian belief in the sacred origins and nature of such men, but he does not find it or the Anarieis loathsome. See Herodotus 1.105, 4.59. Lieber 2008 suggests possible diagnoses of the disease.

40 Tyranny, hubris, and retribution trump ethnosexuality also in Herodotus' Lydian story of Candaules and Gyges, in spite of its strong sexual content: see Herodotus 1.8–12.

41 Aelian, *Varia historia* 12.1. See also Plutrach, *Artaxerxes* 26–7 and compare Xenophon, *Anabasis* 1.10.2; Plutarch, *Pericles* 24.11; and Athenaeus 13.576d. Pervo 2005 analyzes Aelian's story especially as a novella.

42 For conflicts of power and concubines, see Llewellyn-Jones 2002, esp. 38–9.

43 Xerxes' love affairs, as depicted by Herodotus (9.108–14), highlight intrigues among the women of the royal family, but it would be imprudent to deny them the power to influence policy just because they fit a supposedly scheming stereotype: Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1993. See also Hazewindus 2004, 43–128 and Larson 2006.

44 Livy 30.12–15. See also Polybius 14.7.6; Diodoros of Sicily 27.7; Appian, *Punica* 27–8; Cassius Dio 17.57.50–1; Zonaras 17.9.11–13.

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Chapter 25

Platonic and Roman Influence on Stoic and Epicurean Sexual Ethics

James Jope

Plato's Ambivalent Legacy

Traditionally discussion of ancient sexual philosophy has centered on Plato. In earlier dialogues, especially the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*, Plato extolled pederastic love as a path to immortality. Later, in the *Laws*, he condemned it as “unnatural.” Many ink cartridges have run dry over attempts to resolve Plato's ambivalence. Factors invoked may be political (his reaction to Athenian democratic values), social (the role of pederasty in his aristocratic circle, and shifts of public opinion in the fourth century), psychological (Plato's own apparent sexual preference), stylistic (irony), and so on; as well as philosophical. Hubbard (2003, 162–8) provides extensive critical bibliography for this controversy, which still preoccupies Platonic scholars. But the important force in the history of sexual philosophy has not been Plato's definitive position, whatever that may have been, but his unresolved ambivalence itself. Plato's crossed signals invited both admirers and detractors of “Greek love” to enlist the dazzling imagery of his analogies in support of their own contentions. As Blanshard (2010, 95–6) notes, both sides are drawn more by the emotional appeal of such passages than by a systematic comprehension of the philosophical issues.

Blood (2008) exposes a distortion of Plato by an associate of the Bush administration who presented Platonic love as heterosexual, arbitrarily suppressing the explicit male–male orientation of the text. However, Blood's own defense of Plato as a “gay icon” betrays a significant reservation: Blood has to substitute “homophile” for

“homosexual” in order to accommodate Platonic love.

Already in the *Phaedrus*, Plato expressly preferred abstinence and classed even a philosophically oriented physical romance only as second best (256A–D). Although he describes the bliss of such couples in glowing terms, second place was not esteemed in the competitive culture of Greece. However, with the dualist ontology that Plato adapted from the Pythagoreans, he could hardly avoid this. Since only spiritual entities like the soul were authentic and the corporeal universe was tainted, even eros must be chaste if one is to gain more than a fleeting glimpse of the higher realm.

In antiquity, Neoplatonists intensified this dualism and generally followed the *Laws*. But Plato's admirers turned to the earlier dialogues in the nineteenth century, when the nascent defense of homosexuality required some expedient, like Plato's volatile mixture of eros and chastity, because open advocacy of sexual activity could lead to legal suppression. Today, when homosexuality is legal in civilized countries and same-sex marriage is established in progressive jurisdictions, it seems hardly necessary for gay activists still to turn to Plato, swallowing the poison pill of abstinence under its coating of romantic imagery.

Plato, however, also proposed radical changes to relations between men and women. In his ideal state in the *Republic* women would be equally eligible to be trained as members of the governing class (the “guardians”). The institution of the family and the associated inheritance of private property would be abolished, and free love would be practised so that parents would not know and favor their own children, participating instead without jealousy in communal rearing. Although this would have meant an unprecedented level of equality for women, for them too sex was rigidly regulated. Men and women alike would be told when they must and must not mate. All of this followed from the assumption that sex was only a means to an end, namely reproduction. Kathy Gaca (2003) has traced this view, which she calls “procreationism,” back to the Pythagoreans and forward to Roman Stoics, Neoplatonists, and Christians—all of whom distrusted sexual pleasure.

There is abundant evidence of the continued prevalence of bisexuality in late Greco-Roman society; and it was plausible to expect it in the philosophical schools too. Marrou (1965, *passim*) points out that, in spite of the schools' institutionalization, teaching relationships remained personal and intimate. Philosophers might claim, under Plato's chastening influence, that their relationships were not sexual, but this elicited charges of hypocrisy. Bonnet (2000) describes a first-century ce vase found at Herstel in Belgium, which shows four philosophers holding forth pompously, underneath a separate

depiction of them having sex with boys. The juxtaposition of activities in what has been interpreted as the outer and the inner chambers is a crude satire of the alleged hypocrisy. If the four philosophers represent the major schools, the vase, ignoring as it does the considerable differences between them, would represent an indiscriminate bias. We can hardly know to what extent respective claims of chastity and hypocrisy were justified, but erotic relationships, already problematized as a result of the Platonic legacy, were further restrained by another circumstance investigated in this chapter: philosophers became professionals teaching for money, not for love.

Recent scholarship has turned, in a very timely manner, to other ancient schools with progressive views. Although only fragments of his work are extant, Zeno of Citium, founder of the Stoic school, according to Schofield's pioneering study (Schofield 1991) imagined an ideal state much like Plato's but with the critical difference that it was based on love instead of laws. And while mainstream philosophy, dominated by Stoics who repudiated Zeno's sexual views, grew increasingly repressive, Epicureans stood aside and quietly cultivated a more liberated lifestyle.

This chapter examines recent scholarship and ancient evidence on Stoicism, Epicureanism, and the social and economic environment in which they operated and explores the possibility that the brief flowering of radical thought regarding sex and gender in Plato and Zeno was eclipsed by the pursuit of patronage, especially Roman patronage, which favored both the denial of same-sex relations and the rejection of feminist social views.

Stoicism

Stoicism taught that virtue alone is good, and that it is achieved through wisdom. Wealth, health, and other circumstantial phenomena, including sex, are “indifferent.” Like other Hellenistic schools, it sought peace of mind by eliminating “passions” or obsessive desires.

According to Schofield's meticulous investigation of the fragments, Zeno's ideal state was to be an actual city of Stoic sages perfected in doctrine and virtue. Later Stoics imagined it as an international community of sages, at the same time distancing themselves from the sage, who became a remote ideal, while ordinary Stoics were described as being “in progress.” Like Plato, Zeno would have abolished marriage and property; later Stoics included all existing

institutions, such as marriage and property, in the permanent order fixed by “Nature” or “Providence.” Zeno replaced Plato's harsh regimentation with motivation by eros; sex among the wise would be restrained only by the logic of dispassionate love. A sage could perceive potential for virtue in the beauty of a youth and undertake the boy's education. Later Stoics, at least in Rome, dismissed eros as no more than a passion. Whether some Greek Stoics held this view is disputed (see Stephens 1996, 194). Certainly the “cleansing” of Stoic sexual ethics began in Greece (Gaca 2003, 89–90; Schofield 1991, 3–13). As the school became an educational establishment, patrons would have brought conventional values to bear. But Roman intolerance for progressive social views was more intense and pervasive. And it was the Roman brand of Stoicism that had a lasting influence on western values.

Apparently girls, too, would have been eligible for erotic induction into Zeno's community, although Zeno always sought boys and the actual extent of women's inclusion is disputed. Schofield (1991, 44) thinks that they must have been included, because Zeno was responding to Plato's *Republic*. Inwood (1997) reminds us that, after all, Zeno's model of the ideal couple was his teacher Krates the Cynic and his wife. But Zeno was reputedly attracted only to boys, and Nussbaum (2002a, 78–9) suspects that he did not really think out the implications of involving females. Probably all of these views are correct.

Schofield's reconstruction sparked renewed interest in Stoic sexual ethics. Several aspects of Zeno's views have been debated, such as exactly how the potential for virtue could be detected through a youth's beauty. Price (2002), for example, argues that, since the mind is physical (Stoic physics being materialist), it is involved also in sensory perception. But the most difficult issue is that, as a passion, eros should not have been part of a sage's life.

Nussbaum (2002a) wrote a sensitive and fair attempt to understand the role of eros for Zeno. She traces conflicting views of eros in Greek thought (disinterested love versus aggressive passion), then she reviews Plato's presentation in the *Phaedrus* and assesses later positions in relation to that. She observes mitigating features in the love of the sage: it is calm, not possessive,² and its ultimate goal is friendship. Nevertheless, she concludes that the sage cannot love in the full meaning of the word, because he must remain unruffled by “indifferent” events like the loss of the loved one.

In the *Tusculan Disputations*, where he discusses each of the passions, Cicero insists that love (*amor*) is always bad (4.67–70). Nussbaum is irritated: Cicero did not consider all of the kinds of love in the *Phaedrus*, she objects; he is mistaken, even disingenuous

(Nussbaum 1995, 261; 2002a, 82). But Cicero is not even attempting to clarify the philosophical issue here. Rather he is reacting as a Roman. He cites Roman poets like Ennius as well as Greek sources; he speaks in the first person plural as a Roman; and, even though his subject is any kind of erotic love, he seems to be preoccupied with same-sex love, particularly Greek philosophical pederasty. He relates the philosophers' vice to nudity in Greek gymnasia, which gave free rein to “that kind of love”: *Mihi quidem haec in Grecorum gymnasiis nata consuetudo videtur, in quibus isti liberi et concessi sunt amores* (Cic. Tusc. 4.70). This reference to nude athletics, on which the Greeks prided themselves, was a quick trigger for Roman scorn, sharply disassociating “us” (i.e., Cicero and his Romans) from the pejorative *isti amores*.³

The Romans were tough customers for philosophy. Both republican and imperial governments occasionally expelled philosophers. But, more importantly, those who, like Cicero, did interest themselves in philosophy were critical and selective and regarded it only as a cultural enhancement that was not to be permitted to threaten traditional Roman values.

A critical figure in the transition to Roman Stoicism was Panaetius. His main innovation, according to Diogenes Laertius (DL 7.128), was to allow that virtue alone is not sufficient for happiness unless it is accompanied by health and an adequate living. Panaetius lived and traveled for years with an active Roman political and military leader, Scipio Aemilianus. Earlier scholars, like Hicks (1910), did not hesitate to infer that his concession on virtue was to sweeten the pill for Roman consumption: “The introduction of Stoicism at Rome was the most momentous of the many changes that it saw ... Soon the influence of the pupils reacted upon the doctrines taught” (Hicks 1910, 363). In recent decades, however, it has become fashionable to interpret philosophical developments exclusively in terms of philosophical theory; thus Panaetius' concession is seen only as a response to the keen Skeptical Academic and critic Carneades, who questioned the sufficiency of virtue alone. Although this is true as regards the internal debate among philosophers, the desire to please Scipio is still the most probable explanation for Panaetius' readiness to capitulate on his school's proudest principle. Kidd (1971), appalled at such compromise, had to reject Diogenes' testimony and to elaborate an abstruse argument to cast the innovation in a more theoretically respectable light. But his argument relied also on Cicero and Seneca and on the principle that Stoic teachers were educating “progressing” students, not sages—a principle promoted by Panaetius himself, for the benefit of the Romans.

Panaetius is credited with a famous remark about eros (see Long

1974, 215). A young man asked him whether the sage would be a lover; he replied that the sage was another matter, but we who are only fools should not. (Stoics designated all who were not “wise” as “fools.”) Curiously, Long relates this attitude with the “leniency” of Panaetius' educative approach. But how can the injunction not to love, given to a young man in his sexual prime, be regarded as lenient? Panaetius' concession was not to the student, but to Roman conventional morality.

Panaetius also defended property against Zeno (Rist 1969, 199) and even subscribed to the opinion that the ideal constitution was actually the Roman one (Cicero, *De republica* 1.21). Apparently, where sensitive areas like politics and sexuality were concerned, he was prepared to make appalling theoretical concessions.

With Musonius and Epictetus, the transition is complete. Teaching the uninitiated is no longer secondary to creative thinking but has become the primary activity of a philosopher, and the sophisticated argumentation familiar to readers of Plato and Aristotle is often reduced to edifying counsel and casuistry.

But we also encounter a progressive feature, namely Musonius' advocacy of “companionate” marriage.

Traditionally marriages were arranged, and their purpose was not just to produce children but legitimate heirs. Cantarella (2002) reveals intriguing marital arrangements in the Roman Republic. Husbands and fathers could lend wives to men needing heirs, even if the woman was already pregnant. They would divorce, she would marry the other man, and the legal switch would be reversed later. It was the legal status at the child's birth, not the identity of the natural father, that was critical. As regards companionship, it was commonly expected that love affairs, whether with women or boys, would be extramarital.

Treggiari (1991) and others have argued that Roman marriage was shifting to a “companionate” form, more respectful of women's rights and needs.⁴ The extent of the shift is disputed, but social changes made some shift inevitable. If Zeno admitted women in principle but in fact pursued only boys, it was partly because at that time boys were more accessible and the classic model of companionate relationships was with them. And if the women in Epicurus' Garden had been *hetairai* (high-class prostitutes), it was because they would have been the only women with sufficient education and financial independence to join. Plutarch, who was a leading advocate of companionate marriage, satirized the pederastic model in his *Amatorius* (*Eroticus*) with the story of an older woman who abducts a boy, just as older men had done in archaic Crete. But the woman is a wealthy heiress. She could not have existed until legal changes allowed women to

inherit in their own right rather than under the sponsorship of a male relative.

Because Musonius advocated a companionate relationship between husband and wife, he has been admired as a feminist; but was his advocacy of companionate marriage a serious philosophical innovation, or merely encouragement for social changes that were already taking place?

Seeking a balanced assessment of Musonius' feminism, Nussbaum (2002b) attempts to differentiate his Stoic and Roman elements. She finds that his call for women to be educated in philosophy is ultimately expected only to make them better wives and mothers. Engel (2003) goes further, concluding that education itself was the only male privilege that Musonius wished to open for women. Both are aware that he was catering to an audience of wealthy Roman males, but neither appreciates the full weight of this audience's conventional values on Musonius' sexual ethics. To do this, one must also consider his dismissal of same-sex love.

It is not enough to observe that the ban on homosexuality was “peculiarly stringent” (Trapp 2007, 162) or to mention in passing, as does Nussbaum (2002b, 300), that Musonius “much disliked” homosexual relations. Aristotle did not like them either, yet he sought to understand even mature passive men biologically, without stigmatizing them (Sihvola 2002, 217). Neither did Plutarch, but he felt obliged to argue defensively that women could be just as good as boys for companionship (*Amatorius* 766e).

Indeed, Plutarch's approach provides a telling contrast to the Roman attitude. The classic philosophical model for companionate relationships had been Greek pederasty; Zeno wished to radically change social structures so that females, too, could enter such relationships. Although the legal changes mentioned previously made this possible for a few, they did not provide any philosophical script for the relationship. Plutarch struggled to transfer the pederastic model to marriage. His contrivance of casting the woman as the older lover (*erastēs*) was a brilliant literary stroke but no practicable formula; so he then argued that the same emotional bonds involved in pederasty could exist in marriage; but he added, rather surreptitiously, conditions that would actually restrict them to marriage. But Roman Stoics simply dismissed same-sex relations as “unnatural,” invoking the doctrine of procreationism: natural sex was for reproduction.

Like the dichotomy between *nomos* (law, custom) and *physis* (nature), this was a *topos* (commonplace argument) that underwent changes; what was deemed “natural” varied. Shaw (1985), who interprets Stoicism as an “ideology” at the service of the ruling classes,

has argued that, when one equated “nature” with “Providence,” the status quo could always be justified.

Seneca and Musonius insisted that all non-reproductive sexual activity was unnatural and immoral. This was a new level of repression. Nussbaum (2002b, 309) frets that it would rule out sex for infertile married couples, while Trapp (2007, 242–3) observes that even Romans were concerned over the gap between the rigid ethics of the philosophers and the practices of Roman society.

The reproductive stricture would certainly exclude sexual companionship for couples beyond child-bearing age, as well as for same-sex couples. The expectation, too, that reproductive sex should be companionate would taint the reproductive task of wives seconded to heirless men, with whom they could hardly be expected to develop emotional bonds; and it would problematize marriage for political alliances, which was common in Roman politics.

But, more importantly, this model provided only a negative philosophical basis for companionate relationships of any kind. With the erotic passion of the Greek model excluded and its function of personalized education for equal careers and full citizenship blocked for women through inalterable social structures dictated by “Providence,” and with the primacy of raising heirs left unchallenged, it is hardly surprising that Musonius could not imagine any more substantial changes to women's lives than classroom instruction in Stoicism followed by equal partnership in the domestic task of perpetuating the family—a partnership already conceded by Xenophon, and long ago.

In another concession for Roman consumption, Roman Stoics themselves emphasized that one must follow one's personal as well as one's generic nature. Epictetus used this idea to excuse men with keen political or philosophical ambitions for not marrying. Yet the insistence on sex only for reproduction followed not from human nature, but from what was generally assumed to be the generic nature of animals. Indeed Plato, in his early works, had cited the comparison with animals in order to disparage ordinary marital love.

Once again, then, we are dealing with appalling theoretical discrepancies. But what this position did achieve was to leave *isti amores* to the decadent Greeks and to embrace the trend toward marital companionship within limits, respecting the traditional primacy of producing heirs. Musonius' audience (the *senes*, at any rate, if not the young men) must have been elated.

An obvious source of the Roman Stoics' “peculiarly stringent” sexual attitudes was a Roman tradition motivated more by social and political appearances than by serious philosophical ethics, namely an

apparently compulsive tendency to preach sexual morality and to affect outrage over alleged violations. Cicero and Seneca afford obvious examples. Krenkel (2006a, 261–2) even analyzed rules of the game: In the *Unwert-Skala* of political biographers like Suetonius, accusations of incest or fellatio ranked as the most outrageous ones, being followed by passive homosexuality. Active homosexuality was a less serious offence, and adultery least offensive. Students of Roman rhetoric have suggested that such invective aimed systematically to affirm conventional values and thus to align the speaker's case with audience biases, regardless of truth (e.g., Powell and Paterson 2004, 195–6). Thus, although philosophers, like other writers, might use rhetoric, their moralist invective should not simply be accepted as the style of their times; it may also signal an abeyance of critical thinking.

This environment would have stifled any proposals for radical social change. Roman Stoics' indulgence of this prurience undoubtedly enhanced their popularity; however, analogous adjustments can be observed in Roman representatives of the less favored Epicurean school, albeit to a much less serious extent.

Epicureanism

Epicurus identified pleasure, not virtue, as the Good, but defined pleasure essentially as the absence of pain. Therefore he, too, sought peace of mind and rejected passionate erotic desire, which was liable to cause anxiety. But a greater source of anxiety was faulty social institutions such as religion (promoting the fear of death) and government (a necessary evil). So Epicureans withdrew into their own community, the “Garden.”

Details of Epicurus' sexual views have been obscured by the limited survival of his writings and the distorting testimony of opponents. A paramount factor is Epicurean ambivalence about law and social institutions. These were regarded cautiously as possible sources of anxiety, but breaking the law was a greater source of anxiety; the solution was compliance, but without enthusiastic participation. Epicurus was reported as saying: “Sex never helped anyone; one should be satisfied if it does no harm” (DL 10.118)—but also: “I cannot conceive of the good without the pleasures of ... sex” (Usener 67). If the latter asserts the acceptance of sex as a natural pleasure, the former simply states that, like other pleasures, it must be governed by a hedonistic calculus aimed first at avoiding pain. The reasons why sex was risky lay in social institutions as well as in passion. Thus Epicurus also said that “The sage will not have sex with a woman with

whom it is unlawful” (DL 10.118), because adultery leads to anxiety over possible punishment. All of these reservations, properly understood, mean that casual sex in non-threatening circumstances was permitted. Another disputed fragment reads: “The sage will marry and have children ... depending on life's circumstances” (119). Through a mental insertion of “only” before “depending,” this has been taken to mean that Epicurus disapproved of marriage, which is exactly the opposite of what it says. Epicurus actually had a long-term relationship with one of the women in the Garden, with children for whom he provided in his will. This arrangement satisfied the hedonistic calculus. Legal marriage was simply not necessary in the circumstances.

Unlike Stoics, who could openly criticize and modify their school's doctrines, Epicureans were devoted to their master and cultivated an image of orthodoxy. Yet they often did ignore some of the rules. Both Lucretius and Philodemus wrote poetry, for example, although Epicurus distrusted the poetic tradition.

We know little about Lucretius' life and his relationship with Memmius, to whom his poem is addressed. However, his famous diatribe against erotic passion (*De rerum natura* 4.1058–287) has a distinct Roman slant, skillfully detected by Brown (1987). Like Cicero, Lucretius speaks in the first person plural as a Roman. For example, after explaining that prostitutes reciprocate the male's pelvic thrusts to enhance pleasure, he adds that “our wives” need not do that, because their complete passivity increases the chance of conception—which reflects the importance of reproduction in a Roman marriage and, incidentally, works on an assumption that “we” are all married men. But after debunking women's efforts to achieve seductiveness with the help of cosmetics, he adds that they really need not do that, because we men can make allowance for an unattractive woman with a good personality—suggesting an element of companionship. There is, however, one telling difference by comparison to the Stoics: sexual attraction is traced to the visible beauty of the beloved, whether girl or boy (Lucr. 4.1053–4). This is the only mention of bisexuality. Lucretius, like Philodemus and Epicurus himself, seems to have been exclusively heterosexual; but this did not prevent him from acknowledging bisexual attraction as natural.

Interest in Philodemus has burgeoned with the recent recovery of more of his work. Yet it remains true that, contrary to the situation with Lucretius, we possess only scraps of text, but fairly extensive and fascinating knowledge of his life.

Philodemus headed an important Epicurean community in Italy. A well-appointed house has been excavated, which is believed to have been its center. It was here that Virgil acquired his Epicurean

background. The community also had a powerful Roman patron, L. Calpurnius Piso Caesoninus. Although Epicureans were supposed to be apolitical, Philodemus wrote a treatise *On the Good King according to Homer* (*Peri tou kath' Homēron agathou basileōs*), with advice on how to govern ethically. As if this were not enough to suggest adapting doctrine for his patron, his method is to cite and interpret passages from Homer—the poet perhaps most disliked by Epicurus, but a favorite of Piso. The orthodoxy of this work can be defended; Epicurus allowed the sage to “cultivate a monarch in the right circumstances” (DL 10.121b), and the ethical advice that Philodemus extracted from Homer is acceptable. But this defense is strained. Why would he write such a treatise?

We also have portions of a treatise on poetry. Unfortunately they comprise almost entirely negative criticism of other literary critics. Scholars have scrutinized this treatise to reconstruct Philodemus' own poetics, and they made some important findings. For example, Philodemus insisted that poetry is aesthetically autonomous and need not conform to ethical norms. Surprisingly, however, his own love poems in Book 5 of the *Palatine Anthology* receive very little attention, either in Obbink's *Philodemus and Poetry* (1995) or in a more recent paper by Pace (2009). It is too readily assumed that they arouse passion and so are un-Epicurean. Gigante (1995, 46ff.), for example, takes them to be autobiographical and assumes that those that seem incompatible with Epicureanism must predate his conversion.

The love poems fall mostly into two groups.

Some do concern erotic passion and, as is usual in Greek love poetry, Eros is assumed to be an indomitable oppressor. But these poems have ironic undertones. *Anthologia Palatina* 5.13 praises the beauty of a well-preserved older woman and challenges “lovers who do not shun seething desire” (*pothous orgōntas*) to check her out. Their lack of fear of the fierce passion that this woman can arouse is a cryptic warning. In 5.20 the poet confesses (to paraphrase): “I used to fall in love when I was young; but now that I am more mature and know better ... I still fall in love.” This does not encourage indulging passion; rather it is an amusing admission of human weakness.

Other poems concern dispassionate casual sex: a pick-up on the street (46), how to bargain with a prostitute (126), seeking a prettier girlfriend (121). There is nothing un-Epicurean here, but there may be some cultivation of Piso. Cicero, in a speech attacking Piso, charged that Piso had engaged in sexual misconduct and had persuaded Philodemus to immortalize his proud debauchery in poetry (*In Pisonem* 69–71). Of course, it was routine in Roman politics to conjure the image of sexual debauchery; and Krenkel (2006b) showed how brazenly Cicero could reverse his own accusations whenever he

changed sides. Nevertheless, Cicero's hearers would not be receptive to this accusation unless they were familiar with the poems and could regard it as plausible to link them with Piso. Obviously—as Cicero gleefully stresses—a Roman who preferred the Epicurean sect would not be puritanical. Perhaps Piso did encourage his many-talented client to write these actually relatively innocent, but entertaining epigrams.

Philosophers' Finances

Later Stoics offered only feeble arguments against Zeno's eroticism; they preferred to ignore this aspect or to dismiss it as a foible of his youth. One even tried to expurgate his text (DL 7.34). Radical sexual or political views would be more susceptible to social constraints than would the logic, physics, or conventional ethics in which the Stoic school excelled, and shrewd scholars have long suspected a connection here; but few have explored why the Stoics were especially susceptible. Just as Aristophanes' comedies provide evidence of the social role of philosophy in the classical period, the imperial satires of Lucian of Samosata suggest that philosophers' financial circumstances might explain why the brief window on creative ideas about sex and gender was closed. Lucian satirized philosophers of every school and echoed common criticisms, like the charge of sexual hypocrisy reflected by the Herstel vase; but one of his favorite targets was the Stoics' greed. Significantly, Lucian couples his condemnation of the Stoics' pursuit of rich and powerful patrons with a disapproval of their tuition fees (*Symposium* 36 and *Piscator* 34).

Trapp (2007, 249–50) found the same criticism earlier in Quintilian. It was motivated by rhetoricians' dislike of philosophers as their competitors in purveying higher education. It was true, however, that Socrates had rebuked the sophists precisely because they charged fees. Speusippus, who succeeded Plato as head of the Academy, was the first one to charge, and he felt obliged to offer excuses (Joyal, McDougall, and Yardley 2009, 111). Aristippus pointed out defensively that Socrates received ample gifts (Joyal et al. 2009, 87).⁵ Haake (cited after Jones 2009) studied Hellenistic municipal inscriptions involving philosophers and found that, in business and in politics, they were often prepared to break their principles for gain; for example, Epicurean priests are attested, although Epicurus believed that the gods do not intervene in human affairs and that sacrifice is cruel and pointless.⁶

The city state environment of early Greece had enabled radical

intellectual experiments. Percy (1996) and Davidson (2007) have documented bold experiments in the social organization of homosexual relations in archaic Greece, and Solon's cancellation of debts and redistribution of property approached the kind of radical social changes envisioned by Plato. Plato himself was independently wealthy, and thus free to take controversial political and social stances. Zeno, too, was wealthy when he arrived in Athens, coming from a prosperous commercial family.

The Hellenistic schools, which sought peace of mind in an unchangeable political environment, had to adopt survival strategies. Cynics and Epicureans withdrew from society. Cynics withdrew individually. Epicureans withdrew collectively into an alternative community subsidized by its wealthier members and could also court wealthy patrons. Toulouse (2008) reconstructs a telling incident from correspondence between the Emperor Hadrian and Heliodoros, head of the Epicurean community at Athens. His school was in financial trouble, and he asked Hadrian for assistance. The emperor gave him a grant, but gently chided him that philosophers were not supposed to be interested in money. Stoics, however, chose collaboration instead of withdrawal. They sought wealthy patrons and students, charged high fees, and eventually became the principal, and prosperous, philosophical educators of the Roman ruling class—thus attracting Lucian's satire.

Chrysippus, an early Stoic who still held some of Zeno's radical views, warned against trying to live off philosophy (DL 7.189). Cicero too was aware. His description—probably distorted, but plausible to his audience—of Philodemus as a shy and squeamish *graeculus* (poor little Greek) cowed by the persistent demands of the lordly *imperator populi Romani* (Roman generalissimo) into writing what Piso wished (*In Pisonem* 69–70) is reminiscent of Lucian's own disheartening portrayal of the life of a Greek Stoic philosopher in the service of a wealthy Roman patron in *De mercede conductis*.

Plato and Zeno offered more imaginative and progressive philosophies of sex and gender than would be seen again for centuries.⁷ In spite (or because) of their preference for boys, only these two philosophers were able to imagine genuine equality for women. The professionalized instruction of the Hellenistic schools placed erotic relations in a very different light, which encouraged ambivalence and hypocrisy. Cynics and Epicureans preserved some philosophical independence, albeit at a cost. Plutarch could admire the exceptional powerful women who lived in his time; and the still more exceptional woman who would abandon all hope of prosperity to enter a Cynic marriage could participate equally in the Cynic lifestyle, such as it was. But the radical social changes needed to

enable general women's equality were only adumbrated within the sequestered communes of the Epicureans. However much the Stoics encouraged their Roman patrons to foster mild social reforms, they ultimately provided leadership in sexual ethics only for the repressive obsession of the Christians, who redoubled the meddlesome influence of patronage through the more formal and rigid constraints of religious dogma. Progressive thinking on sexual issues passed to others, like Roman poets, who were prepared to question conventional values and to deal with the consequences. And, when they turned to philosophy for guidance, they turned to Epicureanism.

Appendix: Aristotle

Aristotle was the most systematic ancient philosopher. His extant work contains only scattered references to sexual issues, yet even these must be understood in the context of his overall philosophy. Regarding sex, Aristotle stands in a separate tradition from the philosophies studied here. He did not aim to describe or realize an ideal society or lifestyle so much as to understand and assess the existing Greek world. This arguably led him to perpetuate traditional biases (e.g., the inferiority of women); but he also turned to biology to formulate physiological explanations of sexual phenomena that were sometimes comparable with modern medical views. Some interesting material of this kind can be found in the Aristotelian *Problemata*, written by another Peripatetic. An exemplary paper on Aristotle's sexual philosophy is Sihvola's *Aristotle on Sex and Love*, in Nussbaum and Sihvola 2002.

Guide to Further Reading

Several papers cited in this chapter are from *The Sleep of Reason* (Nussbaum and Sihvola 2002), a volume in which reason is very much awake. It is unusual for a reconstruction based on fragmentary evidence to be so widely accepted as Schofield 1991 has been. Reading his book may be instructive for its scholarly method as well as for its subject. Although Gaca's 2003 book focuses on a single doctrine, the overall development that she reveals casts new light on various stages of ancient thought. Brent Shaw 1985 aptly complements the present chapter by applying the modern concept of "ideology" to Stoicism. Trapp 2007 is a good survey of the social

history and environment in which philosophers were embedded. Brown's 1987 book on Lucretius includes useful tools for studying the topic: introductory essays, a detailed commentary on the text of the love passage, and a helpful bibliography (on page 101). An interesting collection of papers relating the Augustan poets to Philodemus and Epicureanism is Armstrong, Fish, Johnston, and Skinner 2004. Finally, Jope 2011 argues for the authenticity of Lucian's *Amores*, which defends philosophical pederasty, as a Greek response to Roman Stoicism in the spirit of the Second Sophistic's revival of Hellenism.

Notes

1 William A. Percy brought the Herstel vase to my attention. Philip R. Bosman provided helpful bibliography with his oral presentation on Roman Stoic marriages at the annual meeting of the Classical Association of Canada in 2010. K. A. Liong called my attention to recent scholarship on Roman oratorical invective. Thanks also to Denise Hudson, A. P. Booth, Beert Verstraete, and of course Thomas K. Hubbard for advice.

2 Zeno reportedly discussed intercrural intercourse (Schofield 1991, 44). Nussbaum 1995 and 2002a believes that not only Zeno, but Greek tradition as a whole regarded this as the only non-violent type of intercourse between males. But perhaps she is generalizing under the influence of Dover's (1978) anal phobia. Dover's authority seems to have grown among philosophy scholars just as it is being questioned by those studying sexuality.

3 In a very instructive study of Roman bilingual usages, Dupont and Valette-Cagnac (2005) show how the Romans culturally adapted Greek words like "gymnasium," which came to signify a quiet garden installation that had nothing to do with athletics: "*Deux réalités sont associées symboliquement par le langage: l'usage romain, pensé comme grec, de la promenade sous les arbres, l'usage grec de l'entraînement des athlètes nus ... Cette référence grecque directe est exclue—elle serait ... choquante pour les Romains ... en même temps que le caractère grec de la promenade sous les arbres est affirmé*" (Dupont 2005, 258).

4 Treggiari's thesis is associated with the controversial views of marriage and the family advocated in a series of publications by Richard Saller and Brent Shaw: for a summary of this debate and references, see Jope 2006 and the book reviewed there.

5 He did not mention that Socrates also earned a living as a skilled

laborer.

6 Lucian duly satirizes an Epicurean priest (Hermon) in his *Symposium*.

7 Gnostic Christians like those criticized by the fourth-century Christian polemicist Epiphanius (*Panarion* 26.3–12: see Williams 1987) practised ritual orgies. Although this may seem at first glance to be reminiscent of both Zeno's inclusion of women in philosophical love and the casual sexual love practised by Epicureans, these Gnostic groups, like Neoplatonists and orthodox Christians, still regarded sex and the body as evil. Semen and menses were devised by the creator of the lower, corporeal world to perpetuate his creation, and they had to be drained from the body to facilitate the soul's escape.

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Chapter 26

Sexual Rhetoric

Allison Glazebrook

While Greeks and Romans had a tradition of invective in iambic poetry and satire, it is surprising to moderns to learn that many of the same *topoi* of attack were a feature of Greek and Roman rhetoric. Such assaults were common in public speeches, but especially in the context of the law courts, where character (*ēthos*) was a valid category of evidence for an ancient jury to consider. What lawyers today would consider a digression, or even a defamation, was in fact a central component of Greek and Roman rhetoric. Nothing was sacred: speakers freely comment on their opponents' sex lives, personal relationships, spending habits, and general conduct, regardless of the offense under scrutiny or the role of the opponent as accuser or accused. They also praise their own conduct and remind the audience of their socially responsible behavior. For these reasons, ancient rhetoric is an excellent source of information on Greek and Roman sexuality and gender. The surviving speeches reveal social expectations and cultural attitudes toward sexuality and sexual behavior through their detailed discussions of character in their narratives and arguments. They classify sexual behavior as normal or deviant, and they consider any sexual deviancy to be confirmation of criminal guilt in the charges at hand. The public nature of speech making means that such speeches influence, and are in turn influenced by, the cultural status quo. Although the various types of oratory (deliberative, forensic, and epideictic) frequently employ similar methods of praise and blame, this chapter will focus on deliberative (political) and forensic (judicial) oratory in classical Athens and republican Rome, since such speeches, particularly forensic oratory, focus on competition between individuals and on the character of an opponent.

The Art of Persuasion

Greek rhetoric was well established as a discipline and art form by the time Aristotle started theorizing about it, but his work is a helpful place to begin before approaching the extant speeches themselves. It is significant to the practice of Roman oratory in particular. Aristotle's work on rhetoric, along with that of his student Theophrastus, became the foundation of Greek and Roman rhetoric and of the Graeco-Roman practice of oratory from the fourth century onwards. Both Cicero's *De inventione* and the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* relied on Aristotle in their discussions of rhetorical theory. What is of interest in particular is Aristotle's discussion of artificial proof in his *Rhetoric*. He identifies three types: *ēthos*, *pathos*, and *logos* (Arist. *Rh.* 1356^a1–4; see Carey 1994, 26–45 and Kennedy 1963, 52–124). *thos* here refers to the self-portrait created by the speaker to establish credibility and to gain the confidence and sympathy of his jury (Arist. *Rh.* 1356^a4–8, 1366^a23–28, and 1377^b20–8). A speaker had to create the impression that he was of good character and full of goodwill, someone whom the audience could trust (1366^a8–12). To convict an opponent, he tried to excite the jurors' anger and fear by exploiting what pleased and what offended his listeners (1356^a20–5); to acquit himself, he attempted to arouse sympathy ([Arist.] *Rh. Al.* 1428^a36–8). While the specifics of what offended and what pleased varied somewhat between Greek and Roman cultures, the technique was employed by both Greek and Roman orators.

Aristotle also mentions a further method of artful persuasion: the construction of the opponent's character and of the character of individuals associated with the opponent (see Russell 1990, 198 and Hunter 1994, 101–10). Aristotle encourages adding details that convey the vices of the opponent (Arist. *Rh.* 1417^a3–8, 1417^b27–8, 1417^a36–^b2) in order to show that the opponent is base and without a doubt capable of committing the offense in question. The speaker can also characterize the opponent so as to influence the emotions of the audience. If the speaker convinces the audience that the opponent is an offensive character, he will kindle the audience's disgust. In each case, discussion of character does not require a detailed or balanced portrait of an individual but is rather a matter of evoking a particular character type, on the basis of knowledge of social stereotypes (1356^b30–4, 1388^b12–91^b17; see Russell 1990, 199 and Scafuro 1997, 64).

Consideration of character is a strong persuasive element in any orator's speech. Donald Russell succeeds in showing how such portrayals of character dominate in all kinds of oratory, but especially in forensic oratory (1990, 200–5; see also Scafuro 1997, 56–66 and

May 1988). The exaggerated emphasis on character comes as a surprise to the modern reader, because such digressions, particularly on the negative character of the defendant, are somewhat out of place in a modern courtroom, where considerations of character are only of secondary importance. Individual character is a factor in current trials of family law, particularly when the judgment concerns the custody of children. In criminal cases, character is not an issue until the sentencing stage, after the jury has decided upon an individual's guilt or innocence. In each case discussions of character must be relevant to the issue being decided upon. In ancient rhetoric, it is the orator's focus on *ēthos* that connects with the topic of sexual rhetoric, since accusations of deviant sexuality were common in attacks on an opponent's character.

Speaking of Men

Allegations intended to arouse negative prejudice against male opponents are numerous and varied: a luxurious lifestyle, thievery, violence, political misconduct, lack of patriotism, mistreatment of parents, sycophancy, spurious citizenship, cowardice, servile origins—all arouse negative prejudice (Arist. *Rh.* 1366^b9–22). Even declaring an opponent's expertise in law and oratory or, at Rome, his knowledge of Greek culture can bias the jurors against him. By far the most effective way of arousing anger against an opponent is to prove that he has little concern for other citizens or for the city itself ([Arist.] *Rh. Al.* 1442^a9–14). Of particular interest to this chapter are accusations of sexual deviancy. Such deviancy includes specific acts, such as philandering with citizen women or acting as a prostitute, but it focuses on the perpetrator's insatiability and on the effect of this lack of control on the community more broadly: sexual deviancy is not simply a perversion, but a corruption that affects all citizens. These allegations contrast accepted sexual behavior with sexual behavior that is considered offensive and even threatening, and in the process they define the traits of an unproductive and irresponsible citizen, who presents a danger to the community. Discussions of sexual behavior might precede discussion of an actual charge as a way to prepare an audience to accept a criminal's guilt. If an opponent cannot control his sexual appetites, how can he be trusted to show restraint in political office or in the management of funds? James Davidson argues that Athenians viewed excessive habits of consumption as a dangerous threat to the individuals themselves, their family, and even the state, believing that such habits revealed a propensity for criminal action

(1997, 213–308). At the same time, youthful folly can sometimes act as an explanation or defense against charges of deviancy (see for example Isaeus 3.17 and Cic., *Cael.* 12.28). Sexual behavior, however, is easy to allege and not always necessary to demonstrate in order to have an effect on an audience (see Tanenbaum 1999).

A standard complaint against an opponent in Greek oratory is lack of control in dealing with a favorite female prostitute. While visiting and associating with such prostitutes was an accepted feature of Greek culture, being under the influence of a prostitute and spending too much wealth on a prostitute were disturbing habits that could be used to question an individual's ability to serve the public interest. Aeschines, Demosthenes, Isaeus, and others accuse opponents of recklessly freeing a favorite prostitute at great expense and wasting their patrimony on such women ([Dem.] 48.53; Aeschin. 1.42; Dem. 36.45; Isaeus 3.17). The liturgy system of classical Athens demanded that wealthy Athenians spend their money on public projects—such as outfitting a trireme, financing a musical chorus or play, benefitting the *dēmos* and polis—rather than on themselves. It was also important to preserve the wealth of each household for future generations. Spending on a prostitute thus represented an irresponsible use of wealth and a lack of self-control when done to excess. The concern was not whether having sex with prostitutes was morally upright; this was rather a question of economics and of *enkrateia*, the ability of a male citizen to control his passions. Such behavior unchecked was proof that an individual would be unable to serve the *dēmos* or to preserve his *oikos* because of being too easily corruptible.

Speakers also accuse opponents of being under the influence of a prostitute who affects their decision making. Such behavior demonstrates a weak mind. Kallistratos, the speaker of Pseudo-Demosthenes 48, argues that his opponent Olympiodoros is driven to extreme behavior by the prostitute he freed (53). The speaker of Isaeus 6 embarrassingly admits that his kin Euktemon received illegitimate sons into his phratry, and also sold off much of his property to please a prostitute. In other cases an opponent's passion for a prostitute resulted in poor decisions and in disputes with others (see Hyperides 4; Lysias 4). Such accusations are even more serious at Rome, where simply hanging around with prostitutes was enough to bring into question one's fitness for public office (Cic., *Verr.* 2.1.39.101). Cicero, for example, accuses Verres of being too much under the influence of his prostitute, Chelidon, and even claims that she was his legal advisor in control of civil law, private lawsuits, and maintenance contracts (2.1.46.120, 51.136). In disgust, Cicero relates how anyone having business with Verres as praetor had to approach the house of Chelidon first and win her favor. He remarks that many

Romans of outstanding decency (*summa pudor*) were forced to visit the home of this prostitute (*meretricis domum*) and to seek her support (2.1.52.137, 53.139–40). Given that prostitutes possessed *infamia*, it was risky for elite Romans to be in contact with them. Not only does Verres associate too closely with such an individual himself, but he also forces other Romans to do so against their will. It is also clear that his motivation is an unrestrained desire for Chelidon (2.1.40.104, 2.2.9.24).

An orator might also portray his opponent as sexually passive. In Greek and Roman culture, some critics have seen the sexual act involving an active and a passive partner, the penetrator and the penetrated, with the male citizen performing the dominant, self-controlled, active role (see Halperin 1990 and Walters 1997). Women, slaves, and free foreigners were properly their passive partners. To be the passive partner was feminizing: Aeschines relates how a fellow Athenian hinted at a sexual relationship between Hegesandros and Timarchos by referring to Hegesandros as *anēr* (a man/husband) and to Timarchos as *gunē* (a woman/wife) (Aeschin. 1.110–11; Fisher 2001, 248–9). Cicero accuses Clodius of going against *fas*, “what is proper,” by being both a *mulier* (woman) among men and a *vir* (man) among women; he thereby condemns Clodius as a pathic and as an adulterer, both of which were indicative of effeminacy, given the association between such activities and the inability to control one's appetite (Cic., *Dom.* 139, and see *De haruspicum responso* 42 and *In Pisonem* 65; also see Cicero on Verres, *Verr.* 2.2.192; on Antony, *Phil.* 2.18.44; and on Gabinius, *Post reditum in senatu* 10—with Richlin 1983, 97–8). Cicero also goes into detail about Antony's relationships with other men, claiming that Antony prostituted himself and then became the “woman” of Curio, reminding us of Aeschines' portrait of Timarchos, mentioned above (Cic. *Phil.* 2.18.44–6). Only deviancy and excessive appetites explained the adult male who performed the role of the passive partner. Such a man was known as a *kinaidos* (*cinaedus* in Latin), a term that suggested not simply sexual passivity, but also an effeminate style and an inability to control one's appetites to the point of engaging in degrading sexual activity. Aeschines refers to Demosthenes' clothing and lifestyle as *anandria* (unmanliness) and *kinaidia* (1.131, 2.99) and more than once labels Demosthenes a *kinaidos* (1.181, 2.88). Cicero's description of Gabinius, a character with perfumed locks and rouged cheeks, fits the character type as well (*Pis.* 11.25). The Greeks and Romans commonly defined masculinity in terms of active versus passive and dominant versus submissive; attacking an opponent's sexuality brought his competency and trustworthiness into question, since only true men possessed the self-control necessary for positions of authority. Any attack on an

opponent's masculinity aimed at demonstrating his inability to control his appetites and desires and thus a propensity for corruption, greed, and sexual deviancy and a tendency to abuse the system to meet these needs.

A serious form of sexual deviancy is adultery (*moicheia* in Greek and *adulterium* in Latin), defined as sexual relations with the wife of a citizen—or, in the Greek world, also with any female kin. In both Greece and Rome men were expected to marry, but sexual relations outside of marriage were acceptable behavior for a husband as long as they were restricted to slaves, prostitutes, and foreigners. Both cultures had harsh penalties (execution, corporal punishment, and fines) for sexual relations with citizen women other than one's wife. Orators label an opponent “adulterer” to highlight that opponent's particular contempt for other citizens and for the law, and also as evidence that such a person infects and corrupts others, and hence the citizen body (see for example Lys. 14.28; Aeschin. 1.107–8; Lys. 13.68; Isaeus 8.44; Cic. *Verr.* 2.4.52.116, 61.136, 64.144; *Pro Sestio* 9.20). Unlike in associations with prostitutes, speakers are cautious about the amount of detail provided, likely because such details compromised the reputation and honor of another family (Aeschin. 1.107). But connecting the adulterer with specific women can be effective because it insulted multiple opponents in one breath; and Cicero makes good use of this practice (*Pis.* 12.28; *Verr.* 2.2.36.89, 47.116, 74.183; 2.3.33.76–8). Such behavior, furthermore, hints at tyrannical leanings (Aeschin. 1.107; Cic. *Verr.* 2.1.32.82; see Fisher 2001, 246, Davidson 1997, 282 and Tempest 2007, 35).

The only surviving court case (in either Athens or Rome) focusing on adultery is Lysias 1, *On the Murder of Eratosthenes*, in which the defendant, Euphiletos, uses the law on justifiable homicide to uphold his actions in murdering Eratosthenes for *moicheia* with his wife. It is not a court case accusing another of adultery, but the defense of an action taken against an adulterer. Euphiletos argues that Eratosthenes' actions corrupted his wife and threatened to destroy his *oikos*, but also affected the health of the city. During his narration of events, he claims that he had the perfect wife—she was the best (*beltistē*) of wives (1.7)—until she was corrupted (*diaphtheiretai*) by Eratosthenes (1.8). *Diaphtheiresthai* is a strong choice of verb because it refers to the complete ruin of the woman, reflecting her loss of social status and position in the polis. More importantly for this narrative, the verb also indicates her change from a good housekeeper and sexually virtuous wife to a manipulative and untrustworthy one (1.11–14). The wife joins Eratosthenes in planning clandestine meetings and constructs lies to cover up their affair and to enable visits from Eratosthenes. Yet the focus of Euphiletos' argument is the threat to his *oikos*, to law and

order, and thus also to the polis (1.30–6, 47). Euphiletos exploits the fears of the jurors regarding their own wives and households and identifies the *moichos* as a threat to social stability. He claims that Eratosthenes had corrupted many wives prior to his own wife. Eratosthenes was thus a serious threat to the entire community and Euphiletos constructs himself, in contrast, as a civic champion. The adulterer is constructed as the archetypal disrupter of the social order and poses a serious threat to social stability.

Another important Athenian speech focuses on male prostitution. The orator Aeschines prosecutes Timarchos using the *dokimasia rhētorōn*, the public scrutiny of orators (1.28–32). Any citizen who spoke in the assembly was subject to the *dokimasia rhētorōn*. Charges laid against Timarchos in the course of the speech that would convict him are cowardice, mistreatment of parents, and mismanagement of one's patrimony. Aeschines, however, chooses to focus on prostitution and sexual deviancy, making the speech an important text for the study of ancient sexuality and the use of sexual invective. Elite youths commonly took on a lover, but their behavior with such lovers was well defined and carefully watched (Dover 1978; Fisher 2001, 25–53). Timarchos was apparently an exceptionally beautiful youth, with many *erastai* after him (1.132–4). As an *erōmenos*, Timarchos would have been courted with gifts and would have been expected to exhibit *aidōs*, modesty, in his dealings with these *erastai*. The popularity of Timarchos could easily be exaggerated and exploited to Aeschines' advantage. Although Aeschines mentions another procedure, the *graphē hetairēseōs*, defining it as a public suit against an Athenian who had worked as a prostitute and then spoke in the law courts and assembly, served as an ambassador, or held some public office (1.19–20; see Harrison 1968, 37), he does not pursue this course of action, likely because he would have needed more than gossip to gain a conviction. Its mention, however, gives authority to his focus on prostitution.

Aeschines begins by claiming that he will pass over the sexual behavior of Timarchos before he came of age, and he only reluctantly relates his later offensive habits. Likely Aeschines has no evidence for the earlier part of Timarchos' life, but the suggestion of a notorious past acts as a foundation for the details he does reveal. He outlines how his act of prostitution was the result of an extravagant lifestyle and of an addiction to pleasures such as gaming and women (1.42). Aeschines thus constructs an identity for Timarchos as male prostitute, driven to this profession by a need for money due to his excesses and an insatiable licentiousness. He suggests that Timarchos is well known for his luxurious habits and extravagant lifestyle, frequently the brunt of jokes (1.80–4), making it believable that he had squandered his

patrimony on pleasures and thus accepted cash payment, as opposed to gifts, while he engaged in all kinds of degrading sexual acts. Aeschines in turn distinguishes Timarchos' sexual relationships from the relationships that he himself has with youths. Using Harmodios and Aristogeiton as well as Achilles and Patroclos as models, he claims his relations with boys are a "just love" (*erōta dikaion*), while in the case of Timarchos and his lovers/friends it is prostitution (1.136–51). Such contrast is essential to his portrait of Timarchos. Furthermore, Aeschines attempts to argue that Timarchos possesses an immoral character (Lape 2006), repeatedly associating him with *bdeluria* ("indecenty") and *aselgeia* ("debauchery") and using forms of *aischrōs* ("shamefully") to modify Timarchos' behavior; this conduct contrasts with the *sōphrosunē* expected of honorable men (1.26, 32, 38, 42, 48, 107). Most importantly for Aeschines, the discussion of Timarchos' lack of control and concern for his own body makes him a liability for the polis (Lape 2006, 154–56 and Worman 2008, 247). If he cannot control himself in his private life, how can he do so in public life? It appears the jurors agreed, since Timarchos disappears from politics, possibly suffering *atimia* as a consequence of this trial.

A quick look at Cicero's Verrine orations reveals ways in which the Roman orator followed Greek models, but also further developed the use of character. As Kathryn Tempest has shown, Cicero's attacks against Verres are modeled upon Aeschines' speech against Timarchos in a number of ways. In his speech, Cicero prosecutes Verres for the mismanagement and abuse of Sicily during his governorship of that province. Accusations of impropriety and deviancy form the backdrop for the portrayal of Verres' character. Cicero builds his argument with frequent references to Verres' inability to contain and control his desires, a fault already discernible in Verres as a young man. These desires motivate Verres' actions. While, according to Susan Lape (2006), Aeschines appears to develop fully the "moral argument" in oratory by presenting Timarchos as "immoral" (see Demosthenes 22 for a precursor to Aeschines), Cicero expands this *argumentum ex vita* beyond the personal realm by singling Verres out as an example of all that is wrong with Rome in his day. As W. J. Tatum argues (2011, 167), the orator has become the upholder of social/traditional values (*mos maiorum*) and the moral teacher of his audience (see also Corbeill 2002, 11–15). How are these themes developed in this particular set of speeches? References to lust (*libidines*) and carnal desire (*cupiditas*) abound throughout the speeches against Verres (*Verr.* 1.5.14–15, 12.35, 18.56, 2.1.24.63, 32.81, 2.2.34.83, 40.97, 78.192). Cicero further associates Verres with shamelessness (*impudentia*), indecency (*stuprum*), adultery (*adulterium*), and burning desires (*flagitia*) (1.5.14–15, 2.2.7.18, 2.2.34.83, 40.97, 54.136, 78.192), aiming to

demonstrate that he used his position as governor to satisfy his personal desires. Cicero hints at nefarious relations with other men's wives and daughters in the community and at the work of his close advisors in procuring for him (1.5.14–15, 2.1.24.62, 2.2.36.89, 47.116, 54.134, 74.183, 78.192). The height of Verres' lust and corruption is the story of his desire for Philomenes' daughter (2.1.24.63–27.69), which precedes the detailed discussion of Verres' embezzlements. Cicero also makes clear that Verres' libido brings him under the sway of women, and even prostitutes (like Chelidon, Pipa, and Tertia), to such an extent that these women influence affairs of state.

Throughout the speeches, Cicero contrasts Verres with others (including himself) known for their decency and positive contributions to the community, isolating Verres' behavior further. He comments that the previous governor of Sicily possessed *continentia* (“restraint”) and in fact appeals to Verres to compare himself to the Sicilian Sthenius, whom Verres persecuted while governor of Sicily (2.2.46.114). Cicero claims outright that Verres lacks *pudor* and *pudicitia* (2.3.4.8) and wonders how any citizen with those qualities can ignore Verres' daily adulteries, whoremongering, and household pimps (2.3.3.6). Finally, Cicero comments that Verres is unfit to raise his own son in ancient principles and civic duty because of his lascivious ways. He claims that Verres will only impart his vices to the son (2.3.68.159–61). Verres' improper behavior has the potential to carry on into the next generation unless something is done now. Although Verres is charged with various crimes, from theft of private and public property to violence and cruelty, it is his deviant sexual passions that form the backdrop to the charges mentioned early on and throughout Cicero's speeches. If Verres is such a slave to his passions, one can be sure he is weak, and thus capable of many other crimes. In Graeco-Roman culture sexual virtue truly was a public concern, and hence sexual invective is also common in other speeches of Cicero: *In Catilinam*, *In Pisonem*, and the *Second Philippic*. These orations employ techniques similar to those used against Verres: they emphasize the *libidines* and shameful habits of the targets of each speech, along with those of their associates, as a way of alienating each personality from Cicero's Roman audience through the arousal of disgust and mistrust. At the same time these orations outline a productive morality for Rome.

Speaking of Women

Women were physically absent from the law courts, as they were from the assembly, from public office, of course, and from other manifestations of the Athenian democracy. They could not bring forward a prosecution—that was the responsibility of their guardian (*kurios*); nor could they appear as a witness. Despite Pericles' famous appeal that there be “the least possible talk about [women] among men, whether in praise [*aretē*] or in blame [*psogos*]” (Thuc. 2.46), mention of women in judicial oratory in particular might appear as part of the narrative of a speech or as a way to establish connections among males. Such texts present us with a discourse on women that was both powerful and authoritative, on account of its legal context. Unlike in the case of men, however, the discourse on women focuses on sexual behavior, dividing women into two main stereotypes that center on praise and blame: that of the sexually virtuous woman and that of the promiscuous whore. Female portraits in Greek oratory are thus important because they reveal ways in which female behavior was defined and why particular behavior had to be conformed to.

Orators praising women refer to them as *sōphrones*, which is typically translated as “chaste” but encompasses obedience to a husband, duty to family, and piety—in addition to sexual virtue. Their dutifulness as wives demonstrates their sexual loyalty. The maintenance of such virtue required from women a particular behavior: avoidance of non-kin males, veiling in public, an averted gaze, silence and blushing in the company of males. In Lysias 1, discussed above, the speaker Euphiletos refers to his wife as *beltistē* by comparison with other wives, describing her excellence at keeping the household in order. He further claims that he also thought she was *sōphronestatē*, the most sexually virtuous of all women (1.7, 10). All this changed, of course, with the arrival of Eratosthenes on the scene. Once she loses her sexual virtue, she is no longer trustworthy and takes an active role in deceiving her husband. The speech thus affirms the Greek belief in the value and importance of controlling female sexuality.

More colorful are the portraits of women associated with the opponent. These women receive the most extensive narratives, where they are typically represented as extravagant, promiscuous, excessive, scheming and/or arrogant. Neaira from Pseudo-Demosthenes 59, charged with impersonating an *astē* (a woman eligible for marriage and bearing legitimate children), exhibits all five traits. She is described as adorning herself in fine clothes and gold jewellery and as having two servants to attend to her personal needs. Apollodoros openly calls her “extravagant” (*polutelēs*, 35–6) and claims more than once that she is available for sex with anyone who wants her (*boulesthai*). He also emphasizes her excessiveness. We see in the

speech that she gets drunk at parties and even has intercourse with slaves ([Dem.] 59. 33). With the help of Stephanos, the one Apollodoros is really after in this prosecution, she comes up with a scheme to blackmail naïve rich foreigners. Neaira accepts them as lovers, but Stephanos then accuses them of adultery and extorts a large sum of money (41). Finally, the speaker describes her as impious (*asebousa*) in relation to the gods, arrogant (*hubrizousa*) with respect to the city, and scornful (*kataphronousa*) toward the laws (12, 107). All these allegations appear to be directly connected with her sexual conduct and with the speaker's claim that she is a prostitute. As I argue elsewhere, other portraits of opponent women in judicial oratory exhibit similar traits (see Glazebrook 2005 and 2006).

The division of women into two classes, wife or whore, is further brought into focus through direct contrast between them. The image of these opponent women is in opposition to the ideal of the modest wife (*sōphrōn gunē*) as developed in texts of the archaic and classical period. The bad women of oratory provide sex to anyone, are excessive in their behavior, and often appear arrogant and impious. Furthermore, they are a drain on a man's household on account of their extravagance and cost (see Cox 1998, 168–89). Orators emphasize this antithesis by openly contrasting the women associated with the opponent to this ideal of the *sōphrōn* wife (Glazebrook 2006, 128–30). For example, the description of Olympiodoros' extravagant *hetaira* contrasts sharply with his sisters, whose poverty and status as wives and female citizens (*astai*) are emphasized in the same passage ([Dem.] 48.55). In the midst of describing the behavior of Phile's mother (in Isaeus 3), the speaker states that married women are not seen at drinking parties and that men do not dare to carouse with them (Isaeus 3.14). In this way the speaker emphasizes the contrast between these women and dutiful wives, and thus between Phile's mother and the wives of the jurors. Again, in the case of Neaira, the speaker contrasts her behavior with that expected of female citizens in general, and he emphasizes that Neaira is the opposite of the wives, mothers, and daughters of the jurors ([Dem.] 59.110–13). The speaker informs the jurors that the most modest (decent) of the women (*sōphronestatai tōn gunaikōn*) will be furious that the men have treated Neaira as their equal (111). Thus he suggests to the jurors that their wives, daughters, and mothers will view Neaira as distinct from themselves, and that it is imperative for the jurors to uphold the distinction between wives and whores. Historically we cannot be certain about the status of these women. Are they perhaps wives or concubines of opponents? Certainly some scholars have argued as much (see Hunter 1994, 113 and Foxhall 1996, 151). These examples demonstrate the strict codes of behavior that female citizens were

expected to follow and how deviation from such norms led to a questioning of their status as wives. It was thus up to the men of the household to police the behavior of their women.

At Rome orators also employed the technique of classifying women into polar opposites on the basis of their sexuality, labeling them as either good wives or insatiable whores (Tatum 2011, 172). In Roman cases, however, we know more about the women under discussion, and thus we can more readily identify the technique of associating opponent women with uncontrolled passion, and even with prostitute behavior, as a way of influencing the audience and of critiquing women for their conduct. The portrait of Clodia in Cicero's *Pro Caelio* is a prime example (Geffcken 1973, 31–4, 37; Tatum 2011, 172–6). Cicero is defending Caelius against a charge of political violence (*vis*), including the attempted murder of an Egyptian envoy and an attempt on Clodia's life. He claims that Clodia is behind the actual charge, being driven by a desire for vengeance after Caelius' rejection of her. The opposition employs the *argumentum ex vita* against Caelius; but, rather than denying such claims, Cicero diverts attention from Caelius' "youthful folly" (as he labels it) to Clodia's indiscretions by portraying her as a "cougar" and by associating her with meretricious behavior (Tatum 2011, 166). Cicero invokes the character of the respected statesmen Appius Claudius Caecus, an important ancestor of Clodia, and imagines him questioning her about her conduct with Caelius (Cic. *Cael.* 14.33–4). Their close association puts Clodia at odds with the behavior appropriate in a *mater familias* and *matrona*, whom Romans held to a high moral standard. Although Clodia has the status of *matrona* and *mater familias*, Cicero is careful in his use of these terms in reference to her, preferring to cast her less respectfully as *mulier* ("woman"). As Geffcken (1973, 30) points out, we never hear of any children of Clodia's—part of the expectations one has of a *matrona*—but she definitely had a daughter (Wiseman 1985, 51 n. 127). Cicero concludes the section by contrasting her image with the *gloria* and *dignitas* of the women in her family who were renowned for their *pudor* and *pudicitia*. Although Roman women had more public visibility and freedom of movement than Athenian women, they still had to check their associations with men in order to demonstrate and maintain their *pudicitia* (sexual virtue). For women, *pudicitia* was the equivalent of the civic and military honor bestowed on Roman men: both were known and openly displayed (see Langlands 2006, 2–5, 30–2). As Marilyn Skinner (1983, 286) points out, Cicero uses Clodia's public visibility (her affluence and autonomy) as a weapon against her. He repeats this strategy in his attack on Sassia, the mother of Cluentius. Just like Clodia in her relation with Caelius, Sassia exploits a youth and ignores *pudor* and *pudicitia* in satisfying her passion (Cic.

Cael. 5.13–6.15).

In addition to contrasting women, Cicero fully develops the equation of a bad woman with the prostitute, which is evident in Greek oratory. According to his account of Clodia, she walks and talks like a prostitute. Cicero points out that Clodia is *nota*, implying notoriety among men (13.31). He refers to her as the *amica* of everyone (13.32). *Amica* here has definite sexual overtones and suggests her status as a sexual companion to various men (Adams 1983, 348–50; Quint., *Inst.* 9.2.99). Cicero has Appius Claudius allude to her strolling along the Via Appia escorted by *alieni viri*—behavior expected of a prostitute with clients, and not of a *matrona*. More frequently Cicero is less subtle. He alludes to her identity as a prostitute in the opening of his speech, when he claims it is the wealth of a *meretrix* that is behind the charges against Caelius (Cic. *Cael.* 1.1). He refers to her neighborhood as a whore hangout (15.37). He comments that Clodia openly practices the way of life of a prostitute (*meretricia vita*) (20.49–50) and associates her with whorish ways (*meretricius mos*) (16.38; see Geffcken 1973, 34 n. 1). He leaves very little to the imagination by frequently reminding the audience of her passion (*libido*). Cicero also draws attention to her bearing (*incessus*), her way of dress (*ornatus*), her chosen company (*comitatus*), her embraces (*complexus*) and little kisses (*osculatio*) (20.49). As Lefkowitz aptly comments, Clodia becomes the “archetypal meretrix” (1981, 35). Cicero is not the only one to exploit the image of prostitution in relation to women: Sallust also uses this strategy in his account of Sempronia in the *Bellum Catilinae* (24.3–5.5). Hillard argues that the image of the prostitute is used as weapon against women who involve themselves in the public world of men (1992, 46–55) and is intended to discredit them. As in classical Athens, the speeches reveal how female conduct, particularly sexual virtue, was open to public scrutiny.

Body Talk

In both Greece and Rome, speakers make sure to present themselves as upright citizens, who abide by the rules and are a benefit to their societies. They present themselves in possession of bodies of moderation and accuse their opponents of excessive appetites, as we have seen. The physical body and the bodily performance of the orator is an important part of this discourse. Appearance, comportment, and gesture identify a body as either worthy or unworthy of its authority. A careful reading of the orator's body

uncovers any failings in terms of gender and social morality, and orators encourage their audience to scrutinize the bodies of speakers. Aeschines, for example, draws attention to speakers of old like Solon, Pericles, and Aristides, who spoke with their arm inside their cloak. He describes a statue of Solon at Salamis that depicts Solon standing erect, with his arm buried in his cloak, in the age-old characteristic way of addressing the people, reflective of the speaker's self-control in all aspects of his life (Aeschin. 1.25). He portrays Timarchos, in contrast, as throwing off his cloak when speaking in the assembly and leaping about half-undressed, revealing his body worn and abused by excess drink and indecent behavior. It is a sight that prudent men should be ashamed to look upon (1.26). Aeschines also argues that Timarchos' abuse of his physical body connects to his presence as a speaker—he cannot open his mouth without reminding his audience of his sexual notoriety (Aeschin. 1.80; see further Worman 2008, 245–6).

In their political battles, Demosthenes and Aeschines accuse each other of an oral delivery that reflects uncontrolled behavior in all other aspects of their lives. Aeschines is clearly a panderer because of his powerful pleasing voice, and Demosthenes' more quiet babbling makes him a *kinaidos* (see Worman 2008, 238–74). In a most cutting remark, Aeschines claims that Demosthenes' body, and even his mouth, are unclean (Aeschin. 2.88), suggesting, as Worman argues, “even more debasing practices” (2008, 240, 255–6). In a related example from comedy, Aristophanes directly connects the sophist Atriphrades with cunnilingus (Ar. *Eq.* 1280–9; see Hubbard 1991, 84–5). Aeschines also claims, in *Against Ctesiphon*, that Demosthenes' skill at speaking parallels his shameful mode of living (Aeschin. 3.174). Aeschines characterizes his own speaking as reflective of his moderate habits (3.218). In *On the Embassy*, Demosthenes takes a similar tactic. He uses his quiet subdued tone to advantage, equating it with a moderate lifestyle. In contrast, he claims that Aeschines uses an illustrious voice as a cover-up for his debaucheries. But in fact his booming voice more accurately reveals his lack of moderation, and even his sexual excesses (Dem. 19.46, 197–9, 206; see Winkler 1990, 66–7). Such attacks aim to undermine the authority of a speaker by questioning his masculinity; thus they also question his right to speak and the need for the audience to listen. At the same time they reveal the importance of the body of the orator and its performance to ideals of manhood and of its corresponding sexuality (see Roisman 2005).

The public and private body of the orator is also of importance at Rome. According to Maud Gleason (1995, 86–7, 109–29), Roman rhetoricians directly connected speaking with the personal habits of the body and recommended specific regimes for an orator to follow

(see also Gunderson 1998). For example, Quintilian recommends that the orator abstain from sexual activity and eat a frugal diet if he is desirous of a more manly voice (*Inst.* 11.3.14). The orator Calvus supposedly slept with lead plates on his sexual organs and kidneys, in order to prevent erotic dreams (Plin., *HN* 34.136). This remedy helped him maintain his stamina for his study of rhetoric and a masculine-sounding voice in the delivery of speeches (see Dugan 2001, 400–28). The body was also a focus of debate between the Atticist and Asianist speakers, two competing styles in Roman oratory. While the “pure” Atticist style emphasized conciseness and brevity accompanied by simple gestures, the Asianist style was more ornate and flamboyant in its language and body movement. Atticists critiqued the showy style of Asianists by associating it with a lack of restraint and effeminacy (see Steel 2006, 57–9; Dugan 2001; Wisse 1995). In practice, speakers openly evaluate the body of their opponent. As Erik Gunderson (1998, 177) argues, “the orator’s body is a public object, the object of close public scrutiny.” His body and habits, on and “off stage,” are fair game.

The mouth, in particular, is subject to a most damning appraisal. Cicero discredits opponents like Sextus Cloelius and Apronius by associating their mouths and tongues with cunnilingus (Cic. *Dom.* 10.25; *Verr.* 2.3.23; on cunnilingus, see Parker 1997, 51–3, and note Ar. *Eq.* 1280–9 above). He appears to pun on *lingua* as both “tongue” and “speech” in his description of Sextus Cloelius (compare Cic. *Dom.* 47; Corbeill 1996, 116, 119). More frequently, Cicero refers to *os impurum* (the impure mouth), using this phrase and other words associated with the mouth to signify the excessive depravity of an opponent in eating, drinking and sex (*Dom.* 10.26, 104; *Verr.* 2.3.23). The references to these minor opponents infect the mouths of Cicero’s main targets, Clodius Pulcher and Verres, by the end of each speech (Corbeill 1996, 102–27). The speaker with an *os impurum* is unfit to speak because, as the example of Clodius demonstrates, he can only do so *impurissime taeterrimeque* (“in a most indecent and offensive manner”; Cic. *Dom.* 104; Corbeill 1996, 123–4). Apronius is in fact barbaric in his speech, just as he is foul in his mouth and body (*Verr.* 2.3.23). Cicero, furthermore, directly contrasts Verres’ mouth with his own, connecting the mouth to actions and words (2.3.5). It was important for the orator to keep his mouth clean and pure, just like his mind and the rest of his body. This focus on the body of the orator in rhetorical handbooks and speeches reveals an anxiety about the correct display of masculinity in Roman society (see Gunderson 1998), but also, as in Greek oratory, an anxiety concerning male sexuality.

Conclusion

In addition to sexual deviancy being a tool of invective, what do we learn about sexuality from an examination of these speeches? What do they teach about sexual expectations from men and women, from elite and non-elite people, and how do these differ? And do these speeches suggest any differences between Athenian and Roman attitudes? Interestingly, not a single case presents an actual criminal charge of sexual deviancy. While Greek and Roman laws existed that prescribed sexual behavior, the orators appear to have been only interested in sexual deviancies (like adultery, passivity, and insatiability) as a reflection of character. Sexual excess suggests an excessive appetite more generally, and the opposite is also true: references to too much drinking and eating also imply an opponent's weakness for sex. The private is truly connected to the public, since both Greeks and Romans believed that such personal weaknesses were the foundation for crimes against the community. In the most extreme example, sexual abuse and sexual excess indicate a propensity for tyranny. The speeches also reveal a double sexual standard, based on gender and status. Female sexual virtue centered on the woman's monogamous relationship with a husband. For men, in contrast, philandering was allowed as long as it was not with other men's wives or daughters. Different standards also applied to status. The *graphē hetairēseōs*, for example, likely only affected the elite, since only elite members of society regularly spoke in the assembly, competed in the law courts, and were politically active. The Roman elite, in turn, was expected to offer a paradigm of sexual virtue, avoiding close association with prostitutes and their hangouts. The civic *ēthos* that all are in this together and all bear equal responsibility for the well-being of the community, which dominated among the elite in the Athenian democracy and under the Roman Republic, makes sexuality and deviancy topics of interest to the community, and thus sexual invective becomes an effective strategy against an opponent. The orator's role as an upholder of public morality is fully developed under Roman orators like Cicero. The Romans also appear to be concerned about particular sexual activities rather than focusing primarily on excess, as the Athenians did. While the *ad hominem* attacks in the speeches of Demosthenes, Aeschines, and Cicero do not necessarily provide us with an accurate portrayal of an opponent, they do reveal much about sexual attitudes and unacceptable sexual practices and point to social anxiety concerning masculinity and female sexuality. They also demonstrate the extent to which the body and its sexuality were on display and subject to public scrutiny.

Guide to Further Reading

The standard introductions to Greek and Roman rhetoric are by Kennedy 1963, 1972 and 1994. Williams 2009 presents a recent comprehensive introduction to the topic as well. Roisman 2005 provides a useful account of sexuality and masculinity in Greek oratory. Davidson 1997, 246–77 presents a focused study of Aeschines' *Against Timarchos*; and see also the commentary on this text by Fisher 2001. For an introduction to invective in Roman oratory and culture, see Richlin 1983. May 1988 provides an excellent account of the use of character in Cicero. A useful starting place for oratory and the body is the work of Gleason 1995. Also see the work of Gunderson 2000 and Dugan 2005.

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Chapter 27

Biography

Caroline Vout

In order to have a sex life, one needs to have a life. In many ways sexuality is a form of biography, a way of putting acts into a personal narrative.

Blanshard 2010, 65

Lives and Sex Lives

Sigmund Freud's influence ensures that today sexuality is key to who we are and how we are judged.¹ Authors like Andrew Morton “dig the dirt” on Tom Cruise and Diana, Princess of Wales: in uncovering the intimacies of their sex-lives, these writers aim at the individual behind the celebrity. It was ever like this, even before psychoanalysis made sexual desire the primary motivation of human action.

But in antiquity lives and sex lives had something of a different relationship. Rather than pinpointing the uniqueness of personality, sexual preference and activity were part of a palette of generic virtues and vices that illustrated a person's capacity to control his or her passions. Plato underlines how bodily desires distract from rational thinking. Self-control (*sōphrosunē*) was the best one could hope for, until one had shed one's mortal coil and the appetites that came with it—hence the popularity of the term as a means of praise in epigraphy and encomia, and indeed in Plutarch's *Lives*, written in the second half of the first century ce.² Even the impetuous Alexander the Great is described as displaying *sōphrosunē* (e.g. 4.4 and 21.5). He has to, if he is to fulfil the function of model ruler, embraced by the Ptolemies, Julius Caesar, Augustus, and his successors. The antithesis was lust, the stock characteristic of a tyrant.³

In Greek historical writing, sex is something Others do. Thucydides' text is decidedly un-sexy, and Herodotus is preoccupied with the sexualities of the dead and of non-Greeks. He has Peisistratos, tyrant of Athens in the previous century, have unnatural intercourse with his wife (Th. 1.61), and a Persian nobleman, Otanes, claim that autocrats are rapists (3.80). Xerxes I, king of Persia, is living proof: his desire for his brother's wife and daughter leads first to the wife's mutilation and then to his brother's revolt and death (9.108–13). Like the stories of Greek tragedy and the capers of the comic stage, where actors performed in padded buttocks and giant *phalloi*, these anecdotes gave fifth-century Athenians something to define themselves *against*.

The lessons learned here are of a piece with the graphic sexual charges weighed against figures like Alcibiades in the courtroom (e.g. by Pseudo-Andocides). Good Greeks did not do sex, but love (Alcibiades was exceptional in being a Socratic lover and an aspiring tyrant). Homoerotic desire was idealized so as to become the cornerstone of democracy, with citizen males as lovers of the city. Popular heroes, Harmodios and Aristogeiton, allowed for debate of this distinction, providing Thucydides with material for an unusual digression (6.54–9). Aristogeiton is the lover of the young Harmodios, who attracts unwanted attention from Peisistratos' son, Hipparchos. They kill him: were they motivated by self-interest or by love of Athens? In time, Harmodios and Aristogeiton come to stand for democratic *erōs* and the end of lustful tyranny (Monoson 2000, Wohl 2002, and Ludwig 2002).

Roman authors work with(in) similar parameters, even if, as Cornelius Nepos makes clear in the preface to his *Lives*, written in the first century bce, masculinity meant something different in Greece from what it meant in Rome. Moreover, Christian Rome and the provinces differed from the capital. There were “good men” and “good men”: an *anēr agathos* was not the same as a *vir bonus*, and the effeminacy of Caesar was not the same as that of Alcibiades or of the Christian bishops, who in late antiquity could describe themselves as “Brides of Christ” (Kuefler 2001, 274). What happened to Roman culture to make this last position possible? Whatever was happening on the ground, and whatever the shifts in masculine behavior and relations between males, invective changed little over the centuries; terms such as *malakia* and *mollitia*, meaning “softness,” remained key terms of abuse. Any discussion of “biography” must bear this genre of material in mind as well as its opposite, panegyric.

Unlike what we find in the Greek tradition, Suetonius' *Lives of the Caesars* and the *Augustan History* that follows in its wake are interested in the sex-lives of their subjects, good or bad. Yet even they are less keen to get under an emperor's skin than to compare emperor with

emperor: so, for example, Claudius is noteworthy for sleeping only with women (Suet. *Claud.* 33.2), Galba for preferring tough, mature men to classic pretty boys (Suet. *Galba* 22), and Elagabalus for never sleeping with the same woman twice, except for his wife (SHA *Elagabalus* 24.2). He does not wear the same shoes or ring twice either (32.1), as sex intersects with luxury to indicate conspicuous consumption. Meanwhile, Caligula is hairy (Suet. *Calig.* 50), Otho and Elagabalus pluck out their body hair (Suet. *Otho* 12.1 and SHA *Elagabalus* 5.5), Caesar is rumored to have done the same (Suet. *Julius* 45.2), and Augustus is accused of waxing his legs (Suet. *Aug.* 68). Such data sets (sexual preference, smoothness, and the like) enable the measurement of fitness to rule in terms of masculinity.

It is this measuring system that this chapter is intent on analyzing. Rather than worrying about the veracity of ancient biography, it will highlight the codes of conduct implicit in comparing and contrasting its subjects. It will also think hard about the commemoration of ancient lives in the material record—something that scholars working on ancient biography woefully underestimate. The sixth-century statue-base associated with the Anavyssos Kouros ([Figure 27.1](#)) may read only “Stand and grieve at the tomb of the dead Kroisos, slain in the front line by wild Ares,” but the sculpture's smooth, muscular body, long hair, and neat genitalia make sexuality a central tenet of who he was and always will be. It mingles with the text, to turn a hapless youth into a Homeric warrior. Roman art and inscriptions are more explicit in their reference to sexuality, and they shape as well as reflect the ways in which later lives are written. Few of the Graeco-Roman sexualities in our case studies can be read straight. Their evocation in art and text is not of factual, but of moral import. The over-arching moral of the story is about what it is to be human.

Figure 27.1 The Anavyssos kouros, marble, h. 194 cm, c. 530 bce.

Source: The National Museum of Athens: inv. 3851. Photo: Hirmer neg. 56i.0409.



Gods and Mortals

It is pleasant to conclude by noting that Roman biography contributed to keeping emperors within the bonds of mortality.

Momigliano 1993, 100

In Greece and Rome, gods and goddesses also had lives—parents,

siblings, children, sexualities. Mythology is made up of version upon version of the birth of Aphrodite, her infidelity with Mars, jealousy of Psyche ...Olympians had bodies like our bodies and enjoyed similar urges. They visited earth for sexual pleasure (Aphrodite with Anchises, Dionysos with Ariadne, Zeus with Leda, Europa, Ganymede and so on, even if in some of these cases the god changed his form into that of an animal). Anthropomorphism created as many problems as it solved: Aphrodite's allure was such that her statue at Knidos seduced a man to attempt sex with the stone, and his category mistake was so great that he threw himself off a cliff the morning after ([Lucian], *Amores* 15–16). Dionysus was effeminate and powerful, and simultaneously, in art, mature and bearded. He too could turn into a lion. His influence freed worshippers from the constraints of their normal life to drink, dance, and have sex with abandon.

“We cannot exclude a priori that biographies of gods and heroes preceded and influenced the biographies of men” (Momigliano 1993, 12). This is especially true in the case of Rome's emperors, many of whom went on to be deified. It would be rather curious, given the ambition of Caligula, Nero, or Elagabalus, or indeed of earlier, non-Roman rulers, if they did not rehearse this role in life: so Athenaeus (12.537e–f), writing at the end of the second century ce of Alexander the Great and citing Ehippos of Olynthos:

sometimes he would wear the purple robe, and slit sandals, and horns of Ammon, as if he had been the god; and sometimes he would imitate Artemis ... Often also he wore a lion's skin, and carried a club, like Herakles. What wonder then is it, if in our time, the emperor Commodus had Herakles' club lying next to him on his chariot, and a lion-skin spread beneath him, and wanted to be called Herakles, when even Alexander, the pupil of Aristotle, represented himself as like so many gods, and even like Artemis?

Commodus, his imperial predecessors, their wives, mothers, sisters, were given gods' bodies in their visual imagery. In the fifth century already, comic poets' criticism of Pericles had made his lechery part and parcel of his emulation of Zeus (Tracy 2009, 105–6). How all of them used their bodies in biography is indebted to divine precedence.

Even the Christian God became embodied in Jesus, whose life history was not limited to the story of the four gospels, canonized in the late second century. Alternative accounts, like the *Secret Gospel of Mark* and its hints of a homosexual encounter, the *Gospel of Philip's* questioning of Jesus' love of Mary Magdalene, or, in a shocking rewrite of Eve's creation, the *Greater Questions of Mary's* anecdote about Jesus producing a woman from his rib, having sex with her, and then swallowing his sperm (Epiphanius, *Panarion* 26.8), raised the

issue of the eroticization of the godhead and the frailty of the flesh.⁴ And this from a religion that defined itself against the veneries of the pagan pantheon, a religion that would later have St. Augustine admit, in what has been called “the first autobiography,” the *Confessions*, to too much sex in his youth and to learning by example (August. *Conf.* 1.16: “Do I not read [in Virgil] of Jupiter sometimes thundering and sometimes committing adultery?”), only to find love of a different kind in Christ. Augustine's life is “always in relation to God” (Clark 1993, 2). But this is arguably the case with everyone's.

Anyone whose life is worthy of record is deemed different in some way, making his sexuality so exceptional as to be hard to control. Aside from his *Lives of the Caesars* and his lost lives of courtesans, Suetonius wrote a work entitled *De viris illustribus* (*On Famous Men*), which included a section on poets: his Persius is strangely virginal, his lustful Horace overly fond of mirrors, and his Virgil prone to passions for boys, in a way that reconstructs his life from his poetry, just as biographies of Greek poets and playwrights had done. The *Life of Euripides*, for example, attributes the misogyny of the poet's plays to the infidelity of his wives (see Lefkowitz 1981, 89–90, 100 and 163–9). But emperors need to be more exceptional still, and to have a sexuality that is titillating enough to stimulate gossip and augment their charisma. Hence my decision to focus next on imperial biography. If invective helps us understand the perversions that make a tyrant subhuman, then the Homeric hymns to Dionysos and Aphrodite and the Gnostic Gospels help us to gauge the parameters within which all super-humans must operate. For all that Plutarch's Alexander can claim that sleep and sexual intercourse made him feel mortal (Plu. *Alex.* 22.3), some men are less mortal than others. Sex is an index that enables us to ask how (extra)ordinary they are. Like screen idol Laurence Olivier, Alexander “could be masculine or feminine but never neuter” (Billington 1987, 71).

Suetonius and his Caesars

We shall not be surprised to find unbridled and theatrically transsexual hedonism at the heart of biographies and portraits of emperors.

Sissa 2008, 157

Sections of Suetonius' *Caesars* are so off the measuring scale when compared to earlier ancient biographies, that it is hard to know what to do with them. By way of example, I start with one of the most

Then on returning to Capri, he even devised “the brothel,” site of secret pleasures, in which flocks of girls and adult males [*puellarum et exoletorum greges*], recruited from all over the place and inventors of unnatural intercourse, which he called *spintriae*, would take it in turns to indulge in threesomes in his presence so as to excite his flagging libido by the sight. The bedrooms were variously decorated with paintings and sculptures of the most lascivious images and figures and with the books of Elephantis, in case anyone lacked an example of a prescribed position for finishing the task in hand. In the woods too and in groves everywhere, he devised “Venus spots” where boys and girls dressed as Pans and nymphs solicited outside caves and hollow rocks ... He burned with a still greater and grosser depravity, so that it is scarcely right to describe or hear, let alone to believe. For example, he trained boys of tender age, whom he called “little fishes” so to come and go between his thighs when he was swimming and play, attacking him gently by licking and biting ... And so when a painting by Parrhasios, showing Atalanta giving oral pleasure to Meleager, was left to him with the condition that if he was offended by its subject-matter, he could accept a million sesterces in its place, not only did he prefer the picture, but he even set it up in his bedroom.

This is pornography, not history—an aged emperor, sexually aroused by images and performances, which in turn excite and repel the reader. There is even a manual in the form of the sexually explicit works by Greek poetess Elephantis—as the reader, too, is invited to learn by example. Who dares to take this seriously? It is in a different league from the legal language used by Tacitus, who speaks of Tiberius' *stuprum* (violation) of free-born youth on Capri (*Annals* 6.1). We feel sympathy with historian Andrew Wallace-Hadrill (1983, 175) when he laments how Suetonius “suspended his critical faculties in the treatment of Tiberius, Caligula and Nero.” We begin to appreciate why Suetonius is one of the few imperial authors yet to attract sophisticated treatment.⁶

But Suetonius himself warns of the dangers of *buying* any of this. “It is scarcely right [*vix fas sit*] to describe, hear, let alone believe”—*fas* being a word that means “morally right” or “permissible by divine law.” The point of the narrative is that it *is* or should be sacrilegious. One must suspend one's disbelief to follow its internal logic. This is not simply a catalogue of aberrant sexual practices: an emperor's association with flocks of girls and men passed their prime (the word is *exoleti* in Latin, the same as he uses of Galba's mature boyfriends, and meaning “grown up” or “outgrown”), his paedophilia, his

penchant for oral sex. It represents the creation of Tiberius' own mythology, an Arcadian space of pseudo-Pans and -nymphs, which finds inspiration even for its most disturbing acts in the heroes of Graeco-Roman culture. For all that the Meleager image here is outrageous, Pan is a god who is elsewhere credited with teaching shepherds to masturbate, having learned this pleasure from Hermes (Dio Chrysostom, 6.20), and with seducing the goddess of the Moon, Selene (Virgil, *Georgics* 3.392–3). Half-human and half-goat, he is the hyper-sexual figure who has sex with a goat in a sculpture from the Villa of the Papyri at Herculaneum and attacks nymphs in sculpture and painting. These images were displayed in villa gardens and in numerous Roman houses.⁷

Suetonius' Tiberius is not just a pervert for transgressing social norms. He is a pervert for attempting to reenact mythology. It is not unlike Nero's reenactments in the arena, when some of the spectators fail to appreciate that the bull before them is not actually having intercourse with "Pasiphae," and when a boy dressed as Icarus falls for real, close to the imperial couch, spattering the emperor with blood (Suet. *Nero* 12.2).⁸ The difference is that for Tiberius—only the second Roman emperor to shape the role of *princeps*—this collapsing of image and reality is as yet embryonic. Parrhasios helps him in his attempt to get there: Parrhasios was a classical painter, notorious for his pursuit of pleasure and for producing paintings so lifelike that he is supposed to have tortured a captive to death so as to make his image of Prometheus. What does it mean to take inspiration from his canvas? The Suetonian Tiberius is still experimenting in how sensational to be and in how far to look to myth for an example. But it is hard to establish what he can and cannot do, especially given his role as moral exemplar. What would it mean to be more indecent than Cicero's Clodius, Plutarch's Sulla, or the elite who holidayed on the Bay of Naples and enjoyed lascivious stories in art, the arena, and the theater—and *not* commit *hubris*?

Tiberius inevitably gets it wrong. He dies, condemned as a bad ruler whose retreat to Capri and reluctance to rule make people's imaginations run away with them. But his behavior raises important questions about the nature of all emperors and about the extent to which they are within or above the law. These are resolutely answered in the case of the insecure Domitian, who strikes an *eques* from a list of jurors for taking back his wife, whom he had divorced for her adultery, even though he himself had done the same with Domitia (Suet. *Dom.* 8.3 and 3.1). But Augustus already can steal his wife, Livia, from her husband when she is pregnant, have affairs with women, many of them virgins, and be accused of far worse, including sleeping his way to the top, and with an ex-consul's wife (Suet. *Aug.*

62.2, 71.1, 68–9), without impinging on his positive reputation or his emphasis on family values. He kills a favorite freedman for his sex with matrons (67.2), exiles his daughter and granddaughter for adultery, and dies, uxoriously, kissing Livia (99.1).

The (we assume, false) accusations about Augustus are as important a part of Suetonius' account as his kissing of his wife. They make the text live, supplying something of the rumor and counter-rumor that is caused by, and contributory to, being high-profile. "Since I have shown how he acted as commander and magistrate ... I shall now discuss his personal and domestic life," writes Suetonius of Augustus (Suet. *Aug.* 61), thereby establishing a formula for his successors. "Unless we allow the emperor to take off his state robes, we cannot see him as his contemporaries saw him" (Wallace-Hadrill 1983, 18). But even Augustus' contemporaries could only come so close, with access controlled by the politics of patronage and by court ceremonial. Any imperial bedchamber witnessed "secret pleasures" that only the imagination could infiltrate. Jealousy and curiosity spun a number of alternative scenarios that made an emperor's everyday life the realm of fantasy.

As the first of Rome's emperors, Augustus sets the standard for those who follow, though he owes much of the credit for this role to his adoptive father, Julius Caesar. Caesar too is said to have executed a favorite freedman for committing adultery (Suet. *Iul.* 48). Both figures dictate how we read the rest of Suetonius and the later Roman collection of imperial biographies, the *Augustan History*. For the sexualities of all of Rome's emperors highlight how far each is and is not Augustus, and indeed the extent to which each is also typical of his dynasty. It is no accident that the last of the Julio-Claudians, Nero, is the most extreme, as, in attempting to outdo the excesses of his predecessors, he self-destructs in a rush of sadism. Tiberius had already committed illicit and cruel acts; immediately after the passage above, he has his wicked way with two brothers, proceeding to have their legs broken when they then complain. Caligula, passive and promiscuous, had had sex with a lowly actor, Mnester (Suet. *Nero* 36.1 and 55.1), and with his sisters (24.1). As the last one in the series, Nero has to trump them (28–9):

He actually tried to change the boy Sporus into a woman by castrating him ...and he married him ...kissing him frequently ... He was rumored to have desired to sleep with his mother ...at last he devised a game in which, covered in the skin of a wild animal, he was let out of a cage and attacked the genitals of men and women who were bound to stakes ...and with Doryphoros, he played the role of bride, as Sporus had done with him, even

imitating the shouts and cries of virgins being raped.

Nero revels in transgressing even the irregular rules of the palatial bedroom, going so far as to overturn nature. Later (35.4), he executes the ambitious Aulus Plautius, after subjecting him to oral rape, deploying his penis as the ultimate weapon.

“The race of the Caesars ended with Nero.” “Galba, who succeeded Nero, was in no way related to the house of the Caesars” (Suet. *Galba* 1 and 2). It is unsurprising that Suetonius should have revelled in the rupture that a year of civil war and four emperors brought with it, and should have stressed Galba's own ancestry, which went back to Jupiter on his father's side and to Pasiphae on his mother's. These offered him a fine sexual pedigree in its own right, and one that Suetonius could exploit to create some sense of continuity: so he too is rumored to have kissed his favorite, Icelus (22), openly and excessively, as Nero had done with Sporus and Caligula with Mnester—and this, in spite of Plutarch's claims, in his life of Galba, about the emperor's *sōphrosunē* (3.2). For him, it was a rival ruler, the low-born Nymphidius Sabinus, who was more dangerously Nero-like, for example in his association with the castrated Sporus (9.3).

The third-century historian Cassius Dio will go on to claim that Sporus associated with Galba's short-lived successors, Otho and Vitellius, as Nero's sexual relationships outlive him and help others assume his mantle (Cass. Dio 63.8 and 64.10). Suetonius' Vitellius was also, in his youth, one of Tiberius' *spintriae* (Suet. *Vit.* 3.2) and was said to have enjoyed a sexual relationship with his freedman, Asiaticus (12), as each emperor asks to be read against the other. When Vespasian finally seizes power at the end of this same year, 69 ce, rules for ten years, and establishes a new dynasty, he is described as a blank slate, “from an obscure family, without ancestral portraits” (1), an “anti-Nero,” anti-Caesarian almost, an emperor who rewrites the formula. Whereas Julius Caesar boasted that his troops would fight even when wearing perfume (Suet. *Iul.* 67), Vespasian tells a sweet-smelling soldier “I would rather you had smelled of garlic” (Suet. *Vesp.* 8.3). This is empire and masculinity redefined and stripped of its feminizing luxury, a redefinition that comes from the distance that only a new beginning can bring with it. It is no accident that, of all Rome's rulers, Vespasian is most self-consciously witty about the job description: after sleeping with a woman, he pays her 400,000 sesterces (22) and has it entered into the account books as “item: a passion for Vespasian.”

Suetonius makes sex a central concern of the imperial biographers that follow him. His Caesars have nothing on the excesses of the *Augustan History*'s later emperors.⁹ Whereas his Caligula (Suet. *Calig.* 52) often played divine dress-up, as Alexander had done, “sometimes

even in the dress of Venus,” Elagabalus (emperor 218–22) goes “that extra mile” for notoriety:

He himself would assume the role of Venus in such a way as suddenly to cast his clothes to the ground and nude, kneel with one hand to his breast and the other devoted to his genitalia, with his buttocks sticking out, moving them backwards and forwards towards his partner. Meanwhile, he used to adorn his face in the very style with which Venus is painted. He depilated his whole body, thinking it a special enjoyment of life if one seemed worthy and ready for the lust of as many people as possible. (SHA *Elagabalus* 5.4–5)

Elagabalus does not imitate the goddess, but an artistic representation of the goddess, in *pudicitia* pose, one arm shielding, or signalling to, her breasts, and the other, her genitals. He does not “simply” take inspiration from art, as Tiberius had done, but becomes it, the word used for “depilated,” *expolitus*, meaning smoothed or polished and being as appropriate for marble as it is for skin. Yet in so doing, he prostitutes Aphrodite's image, turning this prostitution from a shameful act, as it had been for the worshiper of the statue at Knidos, into a prerequisite of the emperor's position. How was he to elicit awe and affection among his subjects? After centuries of imperial showmanship, grabbing their attention had grown increasingly difficult, but still an emperor needed to be loved.

Elagabalus is not alone in the *Augustan History* in being so highly sexed: Gordian II was said to have been so fond of women as to have slept with 22 concubines and to have had three to four children from each of them (SHA *The Three Gordians* 19.3–4). He was nicknamed “Priam,” after the legendary and fertile King of Troy, or “Priapus,” after the rustic Roman fertility god, whose chief attribute was his enormous phallus. At the same time, social norms in Rome were threatened by the premium put on homoerotic philhellenism and the increasing influence of eunuchs at the imperial court: it is hard to know how to read any of these accounts, or indeed Hadrian's “weeping like a woman” at the death of his young male lover, Antinous (SHA *Hadrian* 14.6), when male–male desire was of a piece with the second century's general cultivation of fifth-century Athens.

Emperors like Hadrian and Elagabalus are not just products of their own time. Elagabalus is “the last of the Antonines” (SHA *Elagabalus* 18.1), whom our author would not have written about, “if this same imperial office had not had Caligulas, Neros and Vitellii before” (1.1). He is under his mother's control and later marries an athlete, Zoticus (2.1 and 10.5). In other words, he is Nero, mark two, and his sexuality borrowed accordingly. He is also said to have modelled himself on

Otho and Vitellius (18.4). The biographer of the later emperor, Marcus Claudius Tacitus, draws a crucial contrast between his maturity and Nero's and Elagabalus' youth (they were 16 and 14 respectively when they assumed power): "Indeed if you should wish to consider these monsters of old—I mean the Neros, Elagabalus, Commodus ... Certainly their vices were as much due to their age as to their character" (SHA *Tacitus* 6.4–5). If an emperor has to be superhuman or subhuman to be different from everyone else, how much more so an adolescent? It is not only that Elagabalus is an aberration because his youth upsets the *cursus honorum*, but that a young ruler's transgressiveness is already tied to a template.

Unpicking the truth from the fiction from the expectation in all of this is not easy. But the sexuality of the emperors, the intimate knowledge it implies and the speculation it stimulates, lend themselves to all of these categories, bringing together the "king's two bodies," his private face and public image, to make him as thrusting as Jupiter and as human as the next man. It is impossible to divorce this sexuality from the rest of his literary persona: his dress, feasting, military prowess, love of Greek culture ... All of this makes him what he is. It enables him to perform his masculinity, and us to boo or applaud him. Imperial power has to be hard to grasp, to pin down or quantify. But Suetonius and the authors of the *Augustan History* take a trick from invective. Hierarchy is embedded in sexual intercourse, and this intercourse is key to a ruler's *Nachleben*.

Flesh and Marble

Who will give me life again?

The statue of Helen of Troy, the Cavalier Marino's *La Galeria* 1619, 1:
280

The ancients also commemorated lives in sculpture, inscriptions, and, in the case of the Romans, *stemmata* or genealogical trees of the kind that Suetonius' Galba displayed in his atrium (Suet. *Galba* 2). In addition to these painted biographies, *atria* housed *imagines* or ancestral masks, which were removed from their cupboards and paraded at funerals, thereby reanimating the dead and their relationships with one another (Flower 1996). But honorific and funerary statues already gave idealized physicalities to the dead and the living, creating for them and their relatives alternative lives and substitute sexualities.¹⁰

Take Augustus. Although he was 76 years old as he lay on his

death bed embracing his wife, his most popular portrait is the Primaporta type (Figure 27.2). With a body that owes less to reality than to Polyclitus' Spear-Carrier, a fifth-century nude that was particularly popular with Roman patrons, the piece invites the viewer to imagine what it looks like below the breastplate. That is not hard; so defined are his pectoral muscles and nipples that they puncture its surface, blurring metal, marble, and flesh, to ask where the torso ends and the armor begins. Cupid's presence at his side reminds us that this is no normal general, but one who keeps company with the gods. It also injects the audience's response with the elegiac conceit of *militia amoris*, the age-old idea that love was a kind of warfare (e.g. Ovid, *Amores* 1.9). What kind of man is this? If in doubt about the spear-carrier's ability to lend masculinity to a subject, the statue's Greek name, "Doryphorus," is that of Nero's sexually active "husband."

Figure 27.2 Cast of the Primaporta statue of Augustus, marble, h. 2.04 m; thought to be a later version (c. 15 ce) of a bronze original (c. 20 bce).

Source: Photo © Museum of Classical Archaeology, Cambridge.



The suggestion, and suggestiveness, of the spear-carrier type bring a further set of parameters into play within which to assess Augustus' sexuality and to reassess our own: not just *princeps* against Peisistratos and Alexander, *princeps* against *princeps* and ruler against god, but image against image, ideal male against ideal male. The Prima Porta did not exist on an isolated pedestal, but in a sea of honorific statuary, clothed and unclothed, in which Augustus' great-grandson could assume the guise of Cupid (Suet. *Calig.* 7), and his wife, that of Aphrodite. His funerary inscription, the *Res gestae*, which gives what

presents itself as a first-person account of his life and achievements and which was displayed publicly on bronze pillars outside of his Mausoleum and beyond Rome, avoids personal details over and above the premature deaths of his heirs, but the version from Apollonia in Pisidia was inscribed on a large base, which probably bore five statues of the imperial family.¹¹ These offer a different imperial biography from the text and give Augustus a private life. Pisidia was in Asia Minor: most people there will not have seen the real Augustus and Livia, but they are being challenged to think about the flesh behind the image, to think about what the literary life fails to say. Some of them at least may have been familiar with the Hellenistic novel of Euhemerus, particularly popular in the Augustan period, which tells how Zeus' earthly exploits were inscribed for posterity on a gold column (Bosworth 1999, 12). If Zeus' deeds are the model, and the *Res gestae* a claim to divinity, then what was Augustus up to on Olympus?

Such questions lend themselves to a world in which flesh and marble, and god and image of god, had long been blurred, and not just in the stories about the Aphrodite of Knidos and Pygmalion, but in the regulations that governed the treatment of imperial statuary. Though deemed to be a side-effect of an overly tyrannical regime, people in Tiberian Rome could be executed for beating a slave or for changing their clothes close to an image of Augustus, or for taking a coin or ring with his head on it into a lavatory or brothel (Suet. *Tib.* 58). Statues were seen as reacting to their environment: so equestrian statues of Vitellius are said to have developed cracks in their legs and collapsed (Suet. *Vit.* 9). It would be curious, were they not also to have elicited sexual empathy and desire in the way in which Tiberius' mythological models do, and to have acted as foci for negotiating the distance between subject and palace. Written biography is not composed in a vacuum, and on more than one occasion it explicitly compares itself favorably to the *imagines* as the measure of a life (Tac. *Agr.* 46.3 and Plu. *Alex.* 1.3, in debt to Isocrates, *Evagoras* 73–5). Biography cannot but have found inspiration in surviving portraits of its subjects as in the archives. When Nero was assassinated, his statues were almost all pulled down, with the exception of those that showed him as a child in family groups (Flower 2006, 213). How far did this anomaly fuel the Suetonian charges of maternal incest?

Art and text commemorate life differently. Sculpture freezes its subject at a specific age; in the case of imperial images like the Primaporta, it replicates that subject over and over, with a similar or different body, and sometimes with no body at all, thereby making Augustus as much of a chameleon as the shape-shifting Jupiter. It takes us back in time. But it is also always of the viewers' world, capturing a moment that is resolutely of the present. It is unable to

offer an equivalent to the speeches that are put into mouths by biographers. Rather it speaks directly to us, asks to be appropriated, touched, protected, harmed, as it responds to a changing visual and social environment. It has its own life. In its reception, we come closer to the popular constructions of sexuality that works of well-educated and connected writers like Plutarch and Suetonius can only hint at.

An excellent example of this are the images of Hadrian's young lover, Antinous, which sprang up throughout the empire after his mysterious death in the Nile in 130 ce. The boy's biography is slim; his only achievement is his sexual relationship with the emperor. But his portrait type is one of the most prolific in antiquity, confirming how important an emperor's sexuality could be in giving his subjects something to share in. They may not know what it is like to have Hadrian's resources or to live in an estate like Tivoli, but they can understand a love like this; they might also imagine themselves in Antinous' shoes, winning the emperor's affection. In the process, they construct alternative endings for their lives and a personal life for Hadrian, of the kind that the stereotypes of the *Augustan History* skate over. They feel raw emotion and themselves become biographers.¹²

Antinous is, in a sense, funerary sculpture. By the Flavian period, funerary sculptures of Roman women sometimes borrowed Aphrodite's body so as to imbue their subjects with a desirability that encouraged the yearning that comes with loss (Figure 27.3).¹³ As with Antinous' statues, these are less about lives than about the “next life,” and the disjunction of portrait head and clichéd torso is helpful in signalling the transition from living flesh to enduring stone and from mortal to ideal. Yet none of them is exceptional in exploiting its (or the viewer's) sexuality to commemorate a person's existence. What had only been alluded to in Attica—in the brawn of the Anavysos Kouros, in inscriptions praising young men as “handsome to look at and pleasant to talk to” (e.g. *IG* i² 923) or women as “faithful to their husbands,” and in the intimacy of the departure scenes on fourth-century grave stelae—is writ large on Roman grave monuments in text and image.

Figure 27.3 “Marcia Furnilla,” marble, h. 1.83 m, c. 90 ce.

Source: Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen: inv. 711. Photo: Ole Haupt, courtesy of the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen.



“In general, Latin inscriptions are more informative than the Greek” (Lattimore 1962, 266). A funerary altar, for example, probably from the Flavian period, now in the Lady Lever Museum in Liverpool, and erected by a husband in honor of his deceased wife, details how he took her virginity and still burns with love, as she lies forgetful in

her sarcophagus (Waywell 1982). The implication is that she was chaste before she met him and he was ever faithful; but the inscription is more explicit than we might expect, with a violent vocabulary that viscerally emphasizes their physical separation. A sculpted relief panel above soothes a little, capturing a couple on a banqueting couch in a moment of eternal intimacy (Figure 27.4). On the more elaborate altar of Quintus Socconius Felix, of roughly the same period, this time in Rome (Via Quattro Fontani 13–8), a man and a woman recline together, a Cupid flying in with a garland (Dunbabin 2003, 115–16). In both of these examples, biographies, male and female, are summarized not by *res gestae*, but in the union of man and wife and in the offspring that this might generate.

Figure 27.4 Funerary altar of Pedana, marble, h. 0.70 m, Flavian.

Source: Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight: inv. LLAG 12. Photo: courtesy National Museums Liverpool.



The premium put on marriage in the Roman period only partly explains these monuments. For all of the protection accorded to the citizen body in Rome, sex and sexuality were exposed to public view in ways that the conventions of Greek art controlled: whereas Aphrodite could appear naked in her shrine on Knidos, and nymphs and satyrs enjoy their orgies, human sexual encounters were largely the preserve of sympotic vessels. As the Romans appropriated Greek art, removed Aphrodite from her sanctuary, and put their heads on classical and Hellenistic bodies, they turned Greek style into a vocabulary that made its use all the more self-conscious. It was not *their* language, but an imported one that gave them the distance to make the natural artificial, and thus to “perform their masculinity” in new ways and see themselves in a different light. In a culture in which the *cursus honorum* was key, and biography was painted in *atria* and performed in processions, it is only logical that they should have used this language to “flesh out” their life stories. The eroticism of funerary monuments and the graphic couplings on the walls of villas and baths make Rome's written biography more sexually explicit.

Lessons in Love

Romulus founded the one, and Theseus made a metropolis of the other and each resorted to the rape of women.

Plutarch, *Theseus* 2.2

Even the legendary founders of Athens and Rome have sexualities. Their sexual urges are imperative to the success of their communities, turning each of them from a one-man-band into a leader of cities. But sexual desire also makes them comparable with one another. Sexuality is shaped by social, cultural, and educational norms, but it transcends these to make us human. This duality makes it an obvious tool for interrogating how exceptional someone is in terms that everyone can understand: not their position within an arcane political system, their health, sense of self, their superstition—but their preference in the bedroom. Inevitably, different communities set different expectations and norms: so Alexander can enjoy close homosocial bonds with impunity, in a way that Prince William would find hard even today, Alcibiades can have countless love affairs and rate as a good politician, and the ancients prize small penises above big ... But, ultimately, what they get up to behind closed doors is always open to imagination, and here, in some senses, “the sky's the limit.” Mythology and myth in art shape the ways in which these fantasies evolve. But this is less “everyday life” than it is storytelling.

Life stories can be commemorated in literary or visual form. Sometimes these spheres are rather separate: it comes as a surprise, for example, to learn that archaeologists have found the funerary altar of Vespasian's mistress, Caenis, near to the Via Nomentana in Rome, when the woman plays such a “bit part” in his biography (Coarelli 2009, 404–5). It is not that the sexual partners of our protagonists did not exist, but rather that their significance lies in how their relationships are written up with Roman biographers keener than their Greek counterparts on painting detailed pictures of their subjects' private lives. Often this writing is infected by material culture: the genre of biography, with its virtues and vices, is as influenced by art as by invective or encomia. Augustus is his portraiture, and this is key to his charisma.

Charisma is a charm that persuades where logic fails. How do we describe it? Sexuality provides the biographer with an answer, enables the distraction that bodily desire brings with it to be used positively, to pin down a person's success or failure. Whether Augustus did or did not deflower virgins or Caligula sleep with his sisters is beside the point. These stories give author and readers a scale with which to judge their regimes and to make even the latter a moral exemplar.

Guide to Further Reading

Of particular relevance to the literary bias of this chapter are Skinner 2004, Wohl 2002, Edwards 1993, and Vout 2007. On male–male desire in particular, see Davidson 2007, with its emphasis on love over sex, and Williams 1999. On biography and history, see Lefkowitz 1981, Momigliano 1993, and Elsner and Masters 1994. Zanker 1988 is still exemplary in using visual material to do imperial history.

Notes

- ¹ I would like to thank the Leverhulme Trust for funding the research leave that enabled the writing of this paper, and Robin Osborne for his reading of an earlier draft.
- ² Foucault 1985 (the second volume of his *History of Sexuality*) is still fundamental here.
- ³ On tyranny and virtue and vice in Plutarch, see Duff 1999, 95 and *passim*.

- 4 See Cameron 2001 and, for a broader context, Hopkins 1999.
- 5 For a new reading of this passage, see Champlin 2011.
- 6 Wallace-Hadrill 1983 is still standard. See also Baldwin 1983. The index of Edwards' OUP translation (Edwards 2000) is also invaluable.
- 7 On paintings, see Fredrick 1995, and on *symplegmata* or sculptural groups, see Stähli 1999.
- 8 Crucial context is provided by Coleman 1990.
- 9 Standard on the *Augustan History* is still Syme 1968 and 1983.
- 10 See Kampen 1981 on the genre of “biographical sarcophagi” and Whitehead 1993. I extend their frames of reference to embrace portraiture.
- 11 The new edition by Cooley 2009 is indispensable.
- 12 Most famously here, Yourcenar 1951.
- 13 See D'Ambra 1996 and 2000 and, on the borrowing of Greek bodies more broadly, Wrede 1981 and Varner 2006.

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Chapter 28

Epistolography

Owen Hodkinson

Introduction: Epistolarity

To find evidence for ancient sexuality in epistolography, a reader unfamiliar with classical letter-writing might immediately think to seek “love letters”; but such a reader would be surprised by the relatively slim tradition of literary love letters (however broadly defined). The overlap between the classical traditions of erotic and epistolary writings is substantial (if smaller than we might expect); many texts in this overlap, however, are not “love letters,” but moral discussions of sexuality (Seneca) or literary letters containing erotic narratives. As for “love letters,” there are few enough for Amy Richlin (2006, 8) to write: “There is no other extant collection of love letters from antiquity [beside that between Marcus Aurelius and Fronto].” This illustrates how uncommon they are, even if others would expand this range. This chapter will consider “love letters,” then letters narrating or discussing sex.

I will not dwell on the definition of “letter” (see Gibson and Morrison 2007); it is a difficult form to categorize, given its great variety. Letters can potentially encompass any subject and any form; literary letters are often hybrids of epistolary with other genres (especially first-person forms such as lyric, elegy, and epigram). Epistolography is thus exceptionally broad, both formally and in content. Accordingly, the texts discussed are very diverse, in some cases merely giving a nod to formal epistolarity (e.g. an opening greeting or closing “farewell”): Seneca’s *Epistles* are philosophy in epistolary form; Aristainetos’, miniature narratives; Ovid’s, elegies. Because of such generic hybrids, this chapter will focus primarily on (1) letters not falling under any other genre category to which a

chapter is devoted in this volume;¹ and (2) the contribution of specifically epistolary features to texts' representations of sexuality.

Distinctions between “literary” and “real” letters are unhelpful: the authors of “real” letters discussed (Pliny, Cicero, Seneca, Marcus, and Fronto) are not simply writing for their addressees but are highly conscious of future publication for a wider public; the editing of real correspondence for publication must also be considered. Such distinctions are unhelpful also because of the conventionality and literary nature of all discourse—especially erotic discourse—which means that “real” letters such as Pliny's to his wife bear striking resemblances to elegiac poetry.

Love Letters

Every letter is concerned with absence, since absence necessitates writing instead of conversation.² Love letters therefore frequently make the writer's longing for the addressee their major theme. This basic premise can be expressed in a rich variety of ways, depending on the reasons for absence—abandonment by a lover, exile from home and wife (respectively Ovid's *Heroides*, *Tristia*, and *Epistulae ex Ponto*), temporary absence for political reasons (Cicero to Terentia, Marcus and Fronto to each other), or the attempt to seduce someone to whom the writer has no personal access (Philostratos). Variations on this recurring theme constitute the basis for much of the range of expression in classical love letters.

First, a general observation: there is not much overt representation of sex in letters by comparison with many classical genres. With love letters, an obvious reason is that they are expressions of desire (often formalized) for an absent person; any sexual activity they lead to occurs outside the text. Love letters *may*, of course, overtly anticipate sexual acts, but not many classical examples in fact *do*. In letters to named, respectable persons, including wives, contemporary standards of propriety explain this (though innuendo might be used); the *Heroides*' mythical setting and accompanying register, which is higher than that of typical elegy, explains the scarcity of explicit sex, but innuendo is important. A love letter constituting an attempted seduction might also be cover about sexuality than much erotic literature; only Philostratos' unrealistic “love letters” to anonymous recipients contain frequent details of what the lover would like to do.

In Roman letters, formalized expressions of *amicitia* (“friendship”: see Oliensis 1997) create difficulties in deciding, in letters between men, which ones are “love” letters and which express only an

affection appropriate to *amicitia*; by modern standards, the latter sometimes seem more like the former. This has led to debate over the relationship between Emperor Marcus Aurelius and his former tutor Fronto; I am persuaded of the erotic aspect of their relationship, but not all scholars agree.³ For comparison I include examples from Cicero to male friends, which often display more affection than those to his wife, and as much overt affection as the Fronto correspondence (but without the innuendo).⁴ I quote examples of these not in a separate category of non-erotic letters, but alongside similar expressions from love letters, to illustrate the fine line between conventions of erotic and *amicitia*-based relationships.

The most common erotic theme in love letters is desire for the physical presence of the absent recipient; this is ubiquitous, from Cicero, Pliny, and Ovid to their wives,⁵ through Fronto and Marcus,⁶ or Ovid's heroines to lovers who have abandoned them,⁷ to novel protagonists' letters⁸ and Philostratos.⁹

An important, specifically epistolary variant of this theme is referring to the letter as a physical presence that somehow substitutes for its writer, bringing lovers together physically by being there in their place. For example, Cicero (*Fam.* 15.21.1) writes Trebonius: "Our mutual regret for each other's absence may be softened by long and frequent letters." Pliny's Letter 6.7.1 (to his wife) extends this to other writings beside letters:

You say ...your only comfort when I am not there is to hold my writings [*libellos*] in your hand and often put them in my place by your side ... I, too, am always reading your letters [*epistulas*] and returning to them again and again.¹⁰

Alciphron has courtesan Lamia address her lover Demetrius and refer to "hold[ing] converse with my letters and so with my whole self" (4.16.1). A related motif emphasizes a letter being in the writer's own hand; this was rarer among members of ancient elites, who often employed scribes, so personal inscription indicates to the addressee the importance and personal nature of the contents. Marcus and Fronto frequently mention writing in their own hands:¹¹ Richlin (2006, 21) calls this "a strain of fetishism in the collection, as the paper comes to stand in for the absent person himself." This emphasis is frequent in *Heroides* (e.g. 10.140, 3.2, and 11.1–2, quoted below; see Propertius 4.3.6; Ovid, *Tristia* 5.5.2; Aristainetos 2.13).

The letter-as-writer metaphor extends to the letter's personification: it can "see," "know," and "act" as the writer, and be more than an inanimate object. Thus *Tristia* 5.2.1–2 to Ovid's wife "sees" her reactions on opening it and interrogates her about them: "What? When a fresh letter has come from Pontus, do you grow pale,

do you open it with anxious hand?"

The *Heroides* offer more melodramatic variants on the theme: for instance Canace attempts to make her wounded person present to Macareus in the form of the bloodstained letter he will hold (11.1–8); the parallels between letter and body are emphasized through juxtapositions and interlocking word order: "My right hand holds the pen, a drawn blade the other holds, and the paper lies unrolled in my lap."

Stronger expressions of desire, including reference to its physical manifestations, often adopt the tone and themes of elegy and occur in all kinds of letters, including more formal ones between real individuals. Pliny's famous Epistle 7.5.1 to Calpurnia evokes elegy's *exclusus amator* and "love as sickness" motifs:¹² "Finding [your room] empty I depart, as sick and sorrowful as a lover locked out [*excludo*]."

Ovid in exile similarly desires his wife—but the most important wish seems always to be his own return: in *Ex Ponto* 1.4 a short section (47–53) on longing to be in her arms and kiss her is followed by a final refrain begging Augustus (always an implied addressee in the exile poetry) to end his exile.¹³

Cicero's letters to Terentia contain little tenderness or affection that could be called erotic; note that many are addressed not only to his wife, but to the whole family: for example he hopes he will "come once more into [all] your arms" (*Fam.* 14.1). Stronger affection, which might or might not include sexual desire, is addressed to Tiro: "You ... are the apple of my eye ...if I meet you as I come into the forum ... I shall cover you with kisses. Love me, and good-bye" (*Fam.* 16.27).

Yet within a relationship of *amicitia* (and certainly not of sexuality), expressions that, to modern ears, would befit love letters are found; here is Cicero to his son-in-law Dolabella:

By your recent acts I have been so inflamed that nothing can exceed the ardor of my attachment ... Who could have thought that any addition was possible to my affection for you? Yet so great an addition has been made that I seem to myself only now to love [*amare*], before only to have liked [*dilexisse*]. (Cic. *Fam.* 9.14.4)

A comparison of Cicero's tones to those of various correspondents urges caution in identifying ancient "love letters" by forms of expression alone.

Sexual acts remain the subject of innuendo in many letters (notably the *Heroides* and the correspondence Marcus–Fronto). For the latter, propriety and thoughts of later publication might be the explanation, although it is not as clear that this correspondence was intended to be published as it is in the case of Cicero's or Pliny's. If it was not, then there might be question of what was appropriate to the dignity of the

correspondents' positions (relative to each other and to society); besides, their relationship certainly consisted of *amicitia*—as well as whatever more intimate facets it had. Sexual references are carefully framed as playful innuendo:

Indeed, [my longing for you] is renewed daily and it swells up and, what was it Laberius said about love ...? “Your love grows fast as a leek, and firm as a palm tree.” I'm applying this then to longing [*desiderium*], what he says about love [*amor*]. (Marcus to Fronto, Epistle 25)

Marcus places the innuendo at one remove from reality: it is his desire to see Fronto which grows—that is *compared to*, but is not (explicitly) love (*amor*). Such desire is perfectly acceptable in letters between friends, as seen above; but the innuendo, albeit in simile, is nonetheless suggestive.¹⁴

Some love letters in Greek fictional letter books also employ euphemism or innuendo about sexual desires: since these books contain letters “by” multiple fictionalized personas, use of such expressions, alternating with more explicit sexual references, is simply a matter of variation among the letters in each book and among these personas. Euphemisms occur at the end of Philostratos' Epistle 35: “receive gifts ...dismissing the pretence of chastity, that I ...may be a Zeus and a Poseidon, giving what you desire and receiving what I desire.”

There is frequent use of elegiac and epigrammatic motifs such as the fire of love:¹⁵ “In my perilous plight I cry for water ...but ...love's fire sets even the water ablaze” (Philostratos, Epistle 11; compare Alciphron, Epistle 2.6.2). Tropes common in elegy and other erotic poetry, such as the *paraclausthuron* (lament outside a closed door), are also employed (e.g. Alciphron, Epistle 4.8).

The most frequent tactic in Greek fictional letters is sending gifts: this fits the epistolary form well (a note accompanying a gift being a very common type of letter). Some letters are so short that they are merely epigrams explaining the gift they accompany—not without a neat, poetic compliment: “I have sent you a garland of roses, not to honor you (though I would gladly do that too), but as a favor to the roses themselves, that they may not wither” (Philostratos, Epistle 2—the whole of it).¹⁶

Many letters are more developed, taking their true, central position in the fiction (letters masquerade as accompaniments to gifts,¹⁷ but the gifts are obviously pretexts for the epistolary compositions). Philostratos' letters contain numerous gifts of roses (Philostr. *Ep.* 4, 46, 54). Rustic gifts (like love gifts in bucolic poetry) in Aelian's Epistle 7 include figs, grapes, and wine (with roses to follow in season), and in

Alciphron's Epistle 2.6.1 figs, cheese, a newborn kid, and a couple of hens—though in this example the gifts are given over a period of time, not sent with the letter.

In Ovid's *Heroides* the mythological setting and high register (albeit altered somewhat by blending the personal forms of elegy and epistolography) mean that expressions of desire are generally euphemistic, not explicit:

Just because I once used to lie with you on the leaves of a beech tree,

Don't despise me. I am more suited to the royal marriage bed.

(Ov. *Her.* 5.87–8)

As Smith observes (1994, 262), “Oenone's reference to the bed is indicative not only of her claim to royalty, but of her lovemaking generally.” Besides such euphemisms, scholars have found varying amounts of sexual imagery cloaked in innuendo among the heroines' expressions of desire.¹⁸ Examples of proposed innuendo include a phallic spear—“Tlepolemus warmed the spear of Sarpedon with blood” (Ov. *Her.* 1.19)—and Penelope's masturbation:¹⁹

I would not have lain here, cold in an empty bed,
nor be left behind, to complain, at suffering long days,
nor my hand, bereft, exhaust me, working all night long
to cause deception, with my doubtful web.

(Ov. *Her.* 1.7–10)

Sappho's letter (Ov. *Her.* 15) goes beyond innuendo in recounting her dreams and fantasies about Phaon; the authenticity of this poem has been called into question,²⁰ and a different author might account for the altered tone. But, even if this letter is by Ovid, its more graphic sexual references could be explained by the difference between ventriloquizing a mythological heroine and a historical poet:

I recognize the kisses you engaged in with your tongue,
and used to be ready to take, and to give.

Now and then I caress you ...

...

I blush to tell more, but everything takes place –
and I please—and I'm not allowed to thirst.

(Ov. *Her.* 129–34)²¹

As noted above, Greek fictional letters contain a variety of expressions of desire comparable with those in other texts surveyed; there is, however, a tendency to go beyond innuendo into overt sexual references, including praise of the addressee's sexual ability or

erogenous zones, and desire to engage in particular sexual practices. This tendency is rarely if at all found in extant Latin letters, although there are often similarities with Latin as well as with Greek elegy, and with epigram (all of which may have influenced Greek letters).²²

Another common feature in these Greek letter books is the courtesan (*hetaira*), construed as beloved, and sometimes as lover, and seen pursuing a relationship by writing letters herself; she and other women “write” letters exploring erotic desire from a female perspective, although they are in fact female characters ventriloquized by male authors. Included in this category are a few correspondences featuring male and female sides of a relationship. The only extant epistolary precedents for these pieces are *Heroides* 16–21. The use of courtesans as characters in the love story could account for greater directness regarding sex in such letters; but the most overt expressions occur in Philostratos' *Epistles*, whose addressees are both women and boys, and there is nothing to make us label most of these “prostitutes.”

One courtesan tries to win over a recently married lover by insulting his bride, implicitly praising herself by contrast: “What must it be like to embrace *her* with her clothes off! ... I should prefer to sleep with a toad ...” (Alciphron 4.12.3). Another is angry with a lover who has taken up with another woman, and mentions past encounters: “I overflowed with love ... I kissed you with rapture, I took you into my arms all too passionately, and I allowed you to fondle my titties” (Aristainetos 2.16).

The *exclusus amator* motif and the figurative self-flagellation and humiliation of the downtrodden lover (*servitium amoris*, “slavery of love,” on which see Chapter 20 in this volume), familiar from Latin elegy, are frequently found in Greek prose love letters, particularly in Philostratos, whose dark and sometimes grotesque imagery takes us into the realm of masochism through physical suffering and abasement. Aristainetos includes a love letter from a boy whose initial approach (to a girl) mentions his love pains; the boy offers himself as slave straightaway: “Do you want to have me as your slave? I'd be that willingly ... I will ... be your love slave [*erōtikos ... therapōn*]” (2.2).

More figuratively, Alciphron 2.6 has a lover who is “enslaved” by passion and by giving everything away to his beloved, and “humiliated” by her rejection of him. A lover literally worships his courtesan girlfriend and asks her to “[e]njoy my distress [at humiliation] ... I write with prayers and supplications” (Alciphron 4.8.3–4). Alciphron 4.16 is a love letter from a courtesan to her lover—an reversal of form unusual enough to seem paradoxical; Lamia trembles at the sight of Demetrius (1) and vows to be honorable and not like a courtesan with him (5), to suffer and die for his pleasure (7): “if I give up everything, even my own life, to please you, I shall

count the cost to me as slight.”

Philostratos asks for physical pain, if nothing else, to be inflicted by his beloveds: “If you are unwilling to spare my life, here’s the sword. I am not asking for mercy ... Even for a wound I yearn” (end of Letter 5). Finally, a list of rustic labors that he will endure for a woman forms an odd instance of *servitium amoris*, particularly its unflattering conclusion (Epistle 59): “Only one of the regular country chores I ...will not do— ...milking! Your breasts alone I touch with pleasure!”

A recurring device in *hetaira* letters is the thwarting of generic expectations: attempts by lovers to seduce courtesans as mistresses fall flat because laments and self-pity are inadequate in the real world of the professional courtesan. Two similar pairs of letters (Alciphron 4.8–9; Aelian 7–8) comprise love letters of men rebuffed by *hetairai*, who respond that money, not fine words or tears, is what they need.²³ Similarly, Aristainetos 1.14 is from a courtesan advising youths that music will not seduce her, but “When there’s money, there’s smooth sailing into every port”—a euphemism, but an unambiguous one. Elsewhere in these books the mercenary nature of courtesans is a common complaint (see below). Philostratos bucks the trend in another way, addressing two love letters (Epistles 19 and 38) to a boy and a woman who are prostitutes; paradoxically these letters praise their bought and sold love and its availability to all—precisely the complaint of would-be lovers who try to seduce them, not buy them.

Alciphron features two further items of correspondence comprising male advance and female rebuttal (2.6–7, 24–5). The recurrence of this configuration suggests a play with (usually male-centered) elegy’s seduction techniques, set out as usual in the opening letter, but in these few cases²⁴ swiftly and unexpectedly punctured by a female character who will not be won over. In 2.6–7 it is simply that the man who has been harassing the young woman with unwanted attentions is old and unattractive: “You all of a sudden came up and tried to bend back my neck and kiss me” (2.7.1). She threatens him physically if he tries anything again. In 2.24–5 the girl is a slave of the man and has no choice but to put up with it or, as she says she is resolved to do, take her own life in order to escape him, telling him her true feelings at last: “I loathe you, Gemellus ... I abhor your shaggy body ... I abhor your disgusting mouth with its horrid reek ... You wretch, may you die like the wretch you are!” (2.25.2–3).

Philostratos, as befits his sophistic training, includes several letters that contradict each other in their attitudes to age-old debates about eros:²⁵ in pederastic love, on the ideal stage of maturity of the beloved boy, and, with both women and boys, on the desirability of “natural” versus “artificial” looks. As with other themes, Philostratos

exploits the multiple addressees of his letter book in order to have it all ways. In the pederastic case, Epistle 13 is addressed to a boy whose first beard is beginning to appear, which, when it is full, will “obscure the loveliness of your face”—in other words he will become a man, no longer an adolescent, and therefore not a suitable love *object* (*erōmenos*) but a lover (*erastēs*) in his turn (see Epistle 14). Philostratos uses this argument to try to persuade the boy to give in to his advances, since time is running out for them. Epistle 15 takes the opposite line:

Why, my boy, do you point to your beard? You are not at the end of your beauty but at its beginning ... [B]efore the hair grew on you cheeks they differed not at all from those of a woman ...but now that you are showing your first down, you are manlier ...and more nearly perfect.

So a young adult *erōmenos* (the philosophers' preferred *erōmenos*), not an adolescent, is the desire of “Philostratos” in this letter; however, he will praise whatever attributes the current object of his affections has, to further his cause. Thus Epistle 58 returns to the question, this time on the theme of artificially prolonging youth by shaving:

I commend you for cheating time and shaving your cheeks. That smooth skin which left you by nature's law is now restored by art ... [M]ake your beauty longer lasting. If you do this, you will be imitating the always youthful gods.

But in Epistle 27 he bids a boy leave his natural beauty alone (with no reference to beards or shaving): “No man ever heard of stars adorning themselves, or lions, or birds; and the man who decks out horses with gold ...is guilty ...of handing over to art the business of supplying nature's deficiencies.”

This is precisely what he advocates in Epistle 58. On the question of artifice versus nature in *female* beauty, however, Philostratos (in line with erotic literature generally: see, e.g., Propertius 1.2, 2.18, Aristainetos 2.21) comes down only on one side—that of nature, arguing against cosmetics: “The woman who beautifies herself seeks to supply what is lacking: she fears the detection of her deficiency ...” (Philostr. *Ep.* 22; cf. 40).

Erotic Narratives in Epistolary Form

A form apparently peculiar to Greek epistolary literature is the erotic narrative in letter form. Alciphron, Aelian, and Aristainetos include such narratives alongside love letters, sharing many characteristics of love letters but being more explicit, since they are not attempts at seduction. In some cases the lover-writer confides in a third party, so the reader has the pleasure of eavesdropping on supposedly private tales of erotic adventure. When the writer is not personally involved, the private nature of letters might explain the choice of this form to narrate a story to which epistolarity is not essential; the suitability of epistolary form for "short stories" (not a literary form recognized in antiquity) and the probable connections and certain affinities (including erotic content) between novels and epistolary literature may sometimes be the only reason why epistolary form was chosen.²⁶

Examples of writers narrating to friends (and to eavesdropping external readers) include Aelian's Epistle 1, where a rustic confides secretly, but euphemistically:

I dropped my grapes and ...gathered a vintage of her youthful charms. By Pan, let this remain secret as the great mysteries.

Epistle 9 relates a failed attempt with a *hetaira*, including typical complaints about courtesans' love of money, and a hint at the *exclusus amator*:

[*Hetairai*] are all agape for plunder and ...pretend to be fond of you and ...lock you out regularly ... My way is to make speed in everything: I want to put up their legs and get their business done quicksmart ... I was just on the point of lifting [Thebaïs] by the waist, flinging her onto the couch, and getting action. Damn that soldier who prevented me!

Courtesan-mistresses and soldier love rivals recall New Comedy, as Aelian and Alciphron frequently do.²⁷ Alciphron's *Epistles* 1.11–12 also exemplify the confiding lover motif: a fisherman's daughter informs her mother of her passion for a city guardsman, although her father had promised her to a sea-captain's son.²⁸ The daughter's description of her beloved (1.11.2–3) is a rare example of the female (non-courtesan) subject expressing elegiacally her love, thus taking on momentarily the traditional active role of *erastēs* rather than the passive role normally assigned women. She marks herself out as unusual in this regard by comparing herself to Sappho, the most famous exception to male-dominated love poetry; her mother's scolding response, however, brings her back to reality and to conventional gender roles. Aristainetos offers many similar letters in which the writer confides in a friend about erotic exploits.²⁹

Besides these confided tales of private eros, Alciphron includes two lengthy, titillating descriptions of erotic parties. He sets the scene and

gradually works up to the erotic content, teasing the reader while courtesans and their lovers sacrifice, picnic, and dance sensually, until

We stroked the hands of our lovers, gently unbending their flexed fingers, and between cups we engaged in amorous sport. One and another lay back and kissed her lover, letting him feel her breasts; and as if she were turning away she would actually press her hips on his groin. And now our passions were rising, and there was a rising among the men too; so we slipped away and found a shady thicket a short distance off...(Alciphron 4.13.13–14)

This is the most overt sexual activity in Alciphron; after further feasting and drinking there is a second round: “we girls no longer even cared to keep out of each other's sight or modestly to enjoy our love in secret” (4.13.18).

The letter ends with a (gesture of) justification for the description and for the epistolary form: the addressee, a fellow courtesan, was absent, so her friend declares (4.13.19) that she wrote this account because she missed enjoying it in person. Thus the motivation for writing gives a thin semblance of respectability to the narrative and integrates it into the letter book.

The following letter narrates a similar drunken revel, also to an absent fellow courtesan. This time we read of a beauty contest between courtesans; again, the reader is teased with *hetairai* gradually undressing, first shaking and comparing buttocks through silk shifts (4.14.4), then naked (5). They are described in detail (softness and the way the buttocks vibrate being the judging criteria), while hip and breast competitions are simply mentioned; one *hetaira* who had not yet borne a child won the belly category by default, since others were unwilling to compete (firmness being the criterion). This letter-writer's motivation is to reproach her friend for missing out because she has a regular lover and has become virtuous—and she wishes to make her jealous (1–3)!³⁰

Aristainetos narrates many erotic adventures in which neither writer nor recipient is involved; epistolary form is merely a container for his tales.³¹ After the conventional opening formula begins the tale, the letter is immediately out of mind:*Hermokrates to Euphorion*

A girl said to her nurse...(1.6)

Stesichoros to Eratosthenes

A woman was strolling through the agora...(1.9)

Sometimes epistolarity is more central; this is especially the case in 1.10, which is extremely self-conscious about this feature, containing as it does a letter within a letter. It relates how Akontios used an apple (a traditional love gift) as a love letter, inscribing an oath on it, to

trick his beloved Kydippe into swearing to marry him when she reads it aloud. The story appears first in Callimachus, then in Ovid; Patricia Rosenmeyer explores the erotics and epistolarity of the tale in two excellent chapters (1996 and 2001, 110–30). Aristainetos' erotic tales are as overt (or as tame) in their sexuality as the others surveyed here; the reader is most often teased with the prospect of some action, but that is left implicit, not narrated. Occasionally there is something more explicit, as in this adultery tale: “At the very moment when a woman had her lover within, still mounted on top of her, it so happened that her husband unexpectedly returned ...” (2.22). Note that the explicit reference to the act is brushed aside in setting the scene, not anticipated or described at length. In other letters, where eros takes center-stage, the text teases far more than it describes; so Epistle 2.7, which builds up to the act with talk of rival lovers' (a slave-girl and her mistress) sexual prowess, but breaks off narration before the act, ending: “Yet if you've forgotten ... I'll remind you very sweetly two or three times over of what I've got to offer.”

Another erotic narrative told by a third party is [Aeschines] Epistle 10, in which the writer's travelling companion takes advantage of a virgin, using a local rite in which virgins coming of age offer their virginity to the river-god Scamander by claiming to be the god:

she was in the river pronouncing the customary phrase, “Scamander, take my virginity,” when Kimon jumped out of the bushes in his Scamander costume and said, “with pleasure! Since I am Scamander, I take and accept Kallirhoe ...(10.5)

Epistolary form is again integral to the text but important also because it is suitable for narrating a short story with an informal tone, as argued by Hodkinson (2013).

The Erotics of Seneca's *Moral Epistles*

Seneca's letters to Lucilius are pedagogic: they constitute half of the dialogue with his student,³² and thus they represent his version of Socratic paideutics in Plato's dialogues.³³ But Seneca must forcefully dispel the pederastic erotics of Plato's dialogues (see Chapter 25 in this volume), which is automatically conjured up when readers think of philosophic instruction. For Seneca's brand of Stoicism must be Roman and embody the primary Roman virtue of tough manliness (*virtus*), while the stereotype of (Greek or Greek-influenced) philosophers was

the opposite: licentious pleasure-taking and effeminacy, including the most unmanly vice of the *cinaedus*—being penetrated by another man (*patientia*, taking the passive role). Licentiousness and effeminacy were particularly associated with Epicureanism, which was a problem for Seneca, because he wanted to make Epicureanism acceptable to his Roman audience and to take on the mantle of the most famous philosopher-epistolographer of the past: Epicurus himself.³⁴ Thus Seneca claimed that they only *appeared* effeminate: Epicureans (*De vita beata* 13.3) and Epicurus himself (Epistle 33.2) did not make their bodies available for use, as *cinaedi* did (see Edwards 2005, 86).

In Seneca's Stoicism, pleasures of all kinds (including sexual) lead to temptation away from the philosopher's path and are thus to be avoided; Seneca describes pleasure as “attacking” the body, and he uses penetrative, sexual imagery: “vices steal in [*inrepunt*] through the avenue of pleasure” (Epistle 7.2).³⁵ Pleasure, along with all emotions or passions, can lead to a loss of self-control: but the philosopher [*sapiens*] is mentally “hard as stone” or “impenetrable” (*De constantia* 3.5; cf. Epistle 82.4)—again, a passive sexual image. Pleasure is associated with effeminacy and passivity, and thus with the opposite of *virtus*.³⁶ Therefore Seneca's ideal is celibacy; second place goes to marriage, within which sex is purely procreative: the *sapiens* makes love to his wife with reason (*iudicio*), not passion (*affectedu*) (*De matrimonio* 188 Frassinetti).³⁷ So Epistle 116, *On Self-Control*, advises the aspiring Lucilius:

Panaetius gave a very neat answer to a youth who asked him whether the philosopher should become a lover: “As to the philosopher, we shall see later; but you and I, who are as yet far removed from wisdom, should not trust ourselves to fall into a state that is disordered, uncontrolled, enslaved to another, contemptible to itself.” (Epistle 116.4–5)³⁸

In Epistle 123 Seneca rejects the Platonic idealizing of pederasty and the Roman philosophers who continued this tradition:

I believe that we are also injured by those who masquerade under the disguise of the Stoic school and at the same time urge us on into vice. They boast that only the wise man and the learned is a lover. “He alone has wisdom in this art ... Our study ought to be this alone: up to what age the bloom of love can endure!” All this may be regarded as a concession to the ways of Greece. (Epistle 123.15)

Seneca's *Epistles* are thus philosophical pedagogy without philosophical pederasty. The relationship between Seneca and Lucilius is characterized as fond *amicitia* (see e.g. Epistle 75.3); that Seneca often expresses regret about Lucilius' absence (e.g. 34.2, 35.3, 49.1) is entirely in keeping with the conventions of both epistolary writing

and *amicitia*. But, surprisingly given Seneca's condemnation of effeminacy and passivity, he occasionally uses imagery that might be seen as erotic: for instance Seneca's receipt of a "vigorous" (*virilis*) new book with its "noble" (*erectus*) style by Lucilius (Epistle 46.1–2), which "seduces" (*blanditus*) him, is argued by Habinek (1998) to figure Seneca playing the passive role, being seduced by Lucilius (however playfully).³⁹ See also Epistle 21.5, where Seneca compares himself and Lucilius to Virgil's Nisus and Euryalus.⁴⁰ It seems Seneca cannot help—at least figuratively and occasionally—introducing erotics into the pedagogic–epistolary relationship.

Guide to Further Reading

Roman letters are available in numerous editions and translations, except the Aurelius–Fronto correspondence, which is best accessed through Richlin's 2006 selections for erotic aspects; see Van den Hout 1988, 1999 for full edition and commentary. Text and translation of Aelian, Alciphron, and Philostratos are in Benner and Fobes 1949. The first modern English translation of Aristainetos is Bing and Höschel forthcoming. [Aeschines] 10 is translated in Rosenmeyer 2006, along with selections from many Greek epistolographers; these are also anthologized in Costa 2001. Trapp's (2003) anthology of Greek and Latin letters is an excellent introduction to ancient epistles. Morello and Morrison 2007 will give an idea of the breadth and variety of the genre.

Studies of erotic aspects are rare, apart from Ovid's *Heroides*, on which the classic Kennedy 1984, Lindheim 2003, Smith 1994, Verducci 1985, and Rosenmeyer 1996, 1997 (also on *Tristia*) are good places to start: rather than treating Ovid's letter elegies as (simply) elegies, these studies contain implications about the epistolary form. For a general study see Jacobson 1973. Sophisticated treatments of Cicero's correspondence in its literary aspects include Hutchinson 1998 and Beard 2002. On Cicero's correspondence with his wife, see Claassen 1992, 1996; on Pliny and his wife, Shelton 1990, de Pretis 2003; on Pliny, Catullus, and love letters, Gunderson 1997.

Seneca's *Epistles* are contextualized within his attitude to eros in his other works in Gaca 2003, 87–93, 111–13 and Bartsch 2005.

Studies of Greek epistolographers are rare. The starting point is Rosenmeyer 2001, with chapters on Aelian, Alciphron, Philostratos, and (in Chapter 5 and in the "Afterword") Aristainetos. See Konstan 2011 on Alciphron as pornography. See König 2007 and Hodkinson 2007 on Alciphron's (and, in the latter, Aelian's) use of epistolary

form. On Philostratos, see Goldhill 2009 generally and Walker 1992 on the erotics of the gaze. For [Aeschin.] *Ep.* 10, Hodkinson 2013 is the first study in English. On Aristainetos, see Höschele 2012, Rosenmeyer 1996, and Arnott 1982.⁴¹

Notes

1 Among important genre overlaps with epistolography, for reasons of space, epigram is omitted (see Rufinus, in *AP* 5.9, for a clearly epistolary example; see also Rosenmeyer 2002); so is epistolary elegy, except for whole books combining these genres (Ovid, *Heroides*, *Tristia*, and *Ex Ponto*). Theophylact Simocatta (sixth/seventh century ce) is excluded as “Byzantine” and not “classical.”

2 For this epistolary trope, see Rosenmeyer 2001, esp. 75–6, and Lindheim 2003, 19–22, 28–31 (not only on *Heroides*).

3 See Richlin 2006, 10–23 (at p. 13) for the debate and argument in favor of an erotic relationship: “When Marcus and Fronto write of themselves as each other’s *erastēs* [*Ep.* 34] ...they cannot do so naively ... [W]hatever the relation of the letters to reality, [they] are playing a game ...and the letters are themselves a form of sex on paper”); on the letters’ modern reception, including the reticence to label Marcus and Fronto lovers, see pp. 6–8.

4 Examples come from letters to Trebonius, Dolabella, and Tiro (Plin. *Ep.* 7.4.3–6 believed their relationship was erotic—see Shackleton Bailey 1971, 133; most scholars reject this view, and there is no evidence—see Beard 2002).

5 Cic. *Fam.* 14.4 dwells on absence and possible reunion with Terentia, Plin. *Ep.* 6.4.2–3 on absence from Calpurnia. Ovid (*Trist.* and *Pont.*) complains constantly of absence (through exile) from his addressees and Rome; love for and absence from his wife (e.g. *Trist.* 3.3.17–20) become, however, subsumed under the general exilic condition (*Trist.* 3.3 is a largely a morbid meditation on Ovid’s death and funeral; see esp. 29–84).

6 E.g. Marcus Aurelius, *Epistle* 2.8.5 (in van den Hout’s edition) on absence feeling longer than it really is.

7 Ov. *Her.* 1.1–3 sets the tone for the whole book: “slow to return Ulysses; don’t write back—come in person!” Cf. Propertius 4.3.2.

8 E.g. Ach. Tat. 5.20.4: Clitophon languishes, Leucippe absent.

9 E.g. Philostr. *Ep.* 39: Philostratos, his beloved absent, claims “exile” status both literally and metaphorically.

10 But de Pretis 2003, 140 argues well that *libellos* here could

equally refer to his letters. See also Leucippe to Clitophon (Ach. Tat. 5.24.1; Rosenmeyer 2001, 153 notes: “[the letter] take[s] on a talismanic property ... In the absence of Leucippe ...[it] represents her physical presence”).

11 Fronto, *Epistulae* 9 (Fronto), 12 (Marcus), 18 (Marcus), 22 (Marcus), 32 (Marcus), 33 (Fronto); 40 (Marcus) and 41 (Fronto) mention a lapse in writing. (Marcus' and Fronto's letters are numbered as in Richlin 2006).

12 See Copley 1956 on *exclusus amator* and Chapter 20 in this volume. On Pliny's use of elegiac motifs and on his letters to Calpurnia as love letters, see de Pretis 2003.

13 Consider the emphasis at Ov. *Pont.* 3.1, or the ending of his *Trist.* 5.11.

14 Fronto, Epistle 28 (Marcus Aurelius to Fronto); Richlin 2006 *ad l.* compares “firmness” imagery.

15 See Walker 1992 on eyes and the gaze in Philostratos.

16 The inspiration for Jonson's poem “To Celia;” see Benner and Fobes 1949 *ad l.* and Goldhill 2009, 300–1 on Jonson and Philostratos.

17 See Catullus 68.149: the poem/letter as a gift (*munus*).

18 Smith 1994, 260–3 is cautious but not overly conservative on the matter; see next note.

19 Proposed respectively by Jacobson 1973, 268–74 (who finds copious innuendos in “sexually frustrated” Penelope's letter) and by Henderson 1986, 7–9.

20 Fulkerson 2005, 152 n. 1 provides full references.

21 Or, as Smith translates, emphasizing the overt sexuality: “We go all the way ...and I get all wet” (133f.).

22 It is not agreed at what point—in the third/fourth century ce, or even later—Greek authors begin to reflect the influence of Latin ones: influence of Roman elegy on Greek letters is thus uncertain.

23 See Hodkinson 2007, esp. 298–300 on shifting generic registers within a correspondence.

24 See König 2007 and Hodkinson 2007, with further references on the effects of occasional responses amid usually unanswered letters.

25 Because his letters are addressed either to a woman or to a boy, he does not have the opportunity to address directly the “boy versus woman as love object” debate, as in Ach. Tat. 2.35–8, Luc. *Am.* 25–51, Plu. *Amat.* 3–9.

26 “Milesian tales” are perhaps behind some inset narratives in Roman novels; and they are connected by Stirewalt 1993, 25 and others with [Aeschin.] *Ep.* 10. But too little is known about them to

be sure that they represented a literary “short story” genre; the “prose miniature” prevalent in the Second Sophistic includes many narrative and non-narrative forms, including the Greek letters discussed here (Anderson 1997).

27 See Höschele { on the connections between Greek comedy, novels, and epistolography.

28 See Hodkinson 2007, 290–3, 296–8 for fuller discussion of these letters.

29 Confided *erōs*: Alciphron 1.16; 2.35 (widow raped after repeatedly refusing the man's advances); 3.31 (including desire to die because of love-sickness); 4.2; Aristainetos 1.1; 1.2 (a threesome, two girls and a boy); 1.4; 1.7 (voyeurism with no consummation); 1.16; 2.4; 2.5 (girl's passion for a boy described in Sapphic/elegiac terms); 2.8 (man falls in love with his mother-in-law); 2.10 (a Pygmalion-type story); 2.11 (man in love with both his wife and a *hetaira*); 2.15 (a wife and a widow arrange sex-swap with the other's slave and husband, respectively). More rarely, writers comment on friends' (observed or rumored) loves: Alciphron 1.21 (response: 1.22, friend's advice refused); Aristainetos 2.6.

30 See Alciphron 1.15: a fishing party with (presumably slave or paid) female companions present, perhaps inviting the reader to anticipate erotic adventure, but none transpires.

31 Aristainetos, *Epistulae* 1.5–6, 9–11, 13, 15, 21–2, 27; 2.7, 18–20, 22.

32 Epistolary theory called letters “half a dialogue”: Demetrius, *On Style* 223, cf. Cic. *Fam.* 12.30.1.

33 For Seneca's attitudes to sex generally, see Chapters 21 and 25 in this volume; I will focus here on the erotics of the epistolary–didactic relationship, as this is what is specifically epistolary.

34 See Habinek 1992, 189–90, with n. 10 for references.

35 See Bartsch 2005 and Edwards 2005 for a discussion of the many issues and examples mentioned here; see also Edwards 2005, 87 on the sexuality of this image. See Sen. *Vit. beat.* 4.2.4 (pleasure as enemy of virtue) and 5.4; and Sen. *Ep.* 116.4–5 (quoted in part below: the aspirant to wisdom should avoid pleasure and its temptations).

36 Seneca's Letters 51 and 122 associate effeminacy (also men attempting to look boyish) with pleasure, and proscribe these things for the philosopher. Women dressing/acting as men is also against nature (e.g. Sen. *Ep.* 95.21).

37 Gaca 2003, 112–13; see Sen. *Ep.* 9.17–18 and Gaca 87–93; also p. 61 on *erōs* as inseparable from passion. See Chapter 25 on the implications of Stoic procreationism. Adultery is of course

outlawed, e.g. Sen. *Ep.* 94.

38 See discussion of this passage in Chapter 25 in this volume (on Panaetius).

39 Habinek 1998, 137–50, which also discusses other examples (including *Ep.* 21.5; and compare Edwards 2005, 87–8).

40 Verg. *Aen.* 9.446–9 (see Chapter 7 in this volume). See also Edwards 2005, 87–8.

41 I am very grateful to Regina Höschele and Jenny Bryan for helpful comments on this chapter.

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Chapter 29

Paths of Love

T. Wade Richardson

Five Novels

Of the seven considerable Greek and Roman texts of amatory prose fiction that have come down to us, five (four in Greek, one in Latin) are famously distinguished by their treatment of youthful romantic love from the double perspective of heteroerotic and homoerotic passion. Content from these five novels will be the focus of this chapter. The Greek examples are Chariton's *Chaireas and Kallirhoe*, Xenophon of Ephesus' *Habrokomes and Anthia*, Achilles Tatius' *Leukippe and Kleitophon*, and Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe*; and the genre (a term merited by number and kinship) may well have given rise to a satirical imitation in Latin, the *Satyrica* of Petronius, which places its emphasis, atypically, upon the homoerotic (for discussion of interrelations, see the section on *Peregrinus amor* below). The presence of both versions of love, side by side as it were, invites comment, and even comparison. In the Greek medium heteroerotic sentimentality achieves a kind of canonization that may tempt one to suspect the sparer, more equivocated homoerotic narratives of containing a heteronormative subtext. According to an influential assessment, the "homosexuality serves as a way of marking an unequal or asymmetrical relationship," doomed to fail for want of the amatory equality and sexual symmetry reserved by this genre for the heterosexual erotic ideal (Konstan 1994a, 29).

Lovers in Balance

The homosexual lovers in the Greek novels are therefore at risk of serving as exemplars of ill luck, if not poor choice, in falling into romantic relationships that lack the staying power of heterosexual *eros* properly conceived; the formula for success being emotional and sexual gender balance, promoted by the novelists as never before in ancient Greek literature (Konstan 1994b, 62). It is open to query, though, whether the homosexual friendships actually fail. They certainly end quickly and tragically (in three of the four homoerotic accounts the beloveds die; only Kleisthenes survives), but they do so through the intervention of an envious deity (Xen. Eph. *Habr.* 3.4, *daimōn tis enemesēse*, “some divinity took offense” (trans. Henderson 2009); Ach. Tat. 2.34, *Erōs baskanos*, “the jealousy of Eros” (trans. Winkler in Reardon 1989) without being allowed to run their course. Now this could be argued to be the authors' point precisely. These friendships cannot be allowed to run their course because of an innate erotic disequilibrium caused by a disparity in ages, which happens to be the identifying trait of homosexual relationships of the pederastic type. This loaded premise will be tested in the present study. For now one should observe that in the boy-girl romances the sexual dance essential to all the plots (for it is the main driver of the dramatic tension) is performed with a disparity of gender roles. The differences imposed by human biology and its cultural contracts are hard-wired into the novels. Even Konstan (1994a, 9), relying on data supplied by Xenophon of Ephesus' *Habrokomes and Anthia*, acknowledges features in other novels less promising for his analysis, “important differences ...” that “play against the formal symmetry ...constitutive of the Greek novel as a genre” and “introduce a non-reciprocal aspect” that “does not wholly cancel the fundamental equality of the partners as lovers.” A second caveat emerges from the datum that other relevant classical literature is no stranger to the superiority of the erotic-emotional tie (*erōs*) that functions mutually and reciprocally; and permanence is always nice (Cat. 45, *amare ...omnes ...annos*). Thus the Greek novels neither invented these two elements as concepts nor inaugurated them as ideals. In Virgil's *Aeneid* such a love is conjured by Dido: the love that would accord an emotional, erotic, and pragmatic alliance forever. It is doomed by the fates to fail, and it fails primarily, as the dying Dido well recognizes in a final prayer, because her love was not returned in equal measure: *non aequo foedere amantis* (Virg. *Aen.* 4.520). In the afterlife she meets again her old consort, who can provide this requital: *aequatque Sychaeus amorem* (6.474). The novel's originality therefore lies not so much in conception or imagination as in its interrogation of young erotic love as a literary goal in its own right. One might question, in fact, whether the balance of power in heterosexual *erōs* is even at issue (unless the lovers be equal in their

powerlessness: an interesting notion, deriving from the characters' shared *erōmenos/ē* potential; see below). In Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe*, Pan, in one of the several uses, in the novels, of myths of male chase and female flight, symbolizes his passion for Syrinx by playing upon pipes of uneven design: their passion is not evenly felt (2.34, *ho anisos erōs*). The mandate of Eros is not the balance of power but the balance of love.

The Homoerotic Presence: Pederasty, Pseudopederasty, and the Role of Age

As mentioned, in our selected Greek novels the heterosexual affairs are clearly the marquee draw, with homosexual emotion and sexual attraction in a supporting role. Nevertheless, the reason for homosexuality's presence as a credible romantic option is both broad (it was known to exist) and specific: its juxtaposition with the heteroerotic appears to offer the opportunity to identify and explore, in the two types of romance, synergies of complementarity and competition. The novelists are observed to offer their young male clients these homoerotic storylines for silent and not necessarily disapproving consideration. Chariton's Chaireas, Xenophon's Habrokomes, and Tatius' Klitophon are thereby all exposed to the diversionary challenge of homosexual emotion. The homoeroticism on display is usually assigned (e.g. in Konstan 1994a, endorsed by Henderson 2009, 200), to the conventional model of high classical pederasty, though the distance in time and place from golden-age Sparta, Athens, or Thebes is comparable to that of our era from Tudor England. This promotes a tendentious imbalance constructed along age lines, and with it the contemplation of a love dynamic that may strike students today as creepy and criminal. It seems unlikely that this kind of reception ever was the goal, and that the paradigm could do with adjustment in favor of a homoerotic proposition that reflects better its measure of credibility and allure. There is sufficient evidence, for example, to suggest a different model: one that delineates, with a consistency of narrative and internal emotional resonance that are its hallmark, not the echo of a rebarbative, anachronistic pederasty but a modern mutant, a pseudopederasty, in which the recognizable outlines and a number of contact points of a classical pederasty dynamic are retained, to frame but not to guide the

homoerotic experience of an era that no longer recognized the former gamut of educational and comportment protocols. The star witness to this more compatible and appealing erotic would be the convergence of the lovers' ages and aptitudes in the crafting of a new ideal, to the point where the age gap between beloved and lover will be confined to no more than an emotionally acceptable two or three years—that is, it would be as narrow as possible within the recognized prototypes for adjacent male age terminology (see pp. 482–4). Clues to reconciliation are to be found in the language that takes care to establish both sets of young males as members of the abutting and even overlapping age categories of *meirakion*, lad, and *neos*, youth; to define empathic attributes; and to prescribe merging physiques and interests, exemplified by shared athletic passions like military drills, wrestling, and horseback hunting—a high-risk manly behavior. In contrast, conventional pederastic relations “as they were predominantly imagined in classical antiquity” (Konstan 1994b, 53) draw their essence from the educational prescription of age divergence, out of which asymmetrical knowledge and sanctioned authority flow.

In this fashionable hybrid, and despite the historicized setting of, for example, Chariton's *Chaireas and Kallirhoe*, the authors of the novels attest to the result of a long process of natural evolution through the Hellenistic world, with its changes in civic ideology and hegemonic infrastructure, now overlaid by the pragmatism and self-entitlement of its Roman setting. Rome, furthermore, never a partisan of Greek-style pederasty with its ever anxious and problematic institutional sponsorship of sexual relations with underage citizen males, would have little time for defending the line, so stoutly defended in the Greek past, that separates plausible erotic motives from pure predation. One may observe in the Greek novels a model that has broken into two, marking the tension between a vestigial cultural pederasty and the candidly libidinal. In the one, the lover remains sincere and smitten (Xenophon's Hippothous; Tatius' Kleinias and Menelaos); in the other, he is a cynical seducer, quite free to seek sex, by persuasion or force, with whomever he chooses (Xenophon's Korymbos and other pirates; Tatius' Menelaos when not in love; Longus' Gnathon—see pp. 84–9 for these narratives). Petronius' Eumolpus supplies a ready example of untrammelled Roman choice that has swept away the norms and proprieties restricting sexual exploitation to the servile male: a seducer of free-born youths, but in a pinch frugal enough to treat the over-age Encolpius as a boy, and for now content with the Venusine bottom of Philomela's lovely young daughter (Petr. *Sat.* 85.1f., 140.5).

As noted (see p. 480), the impact of heterosexual romantic union

has long been understood, in the ideal, to need to fall equally. To this one adds a tenet of the novel: it is likely to fall most equally upon young people of equivalent age. In our texts the heterosexual lovers (and newlyweds) appear to have the advantage, for on all occasions but one the girl-boy gap is expressly confirmed or readily inferred to be no more than two years, the girls being 14 and the boys (about) 16; Kleitophon is 18. By this slight off-set, biology is enlisted to ensure that the couple's emotional and physical receptivity to marriage is put in synchrony for the shared experience. The ages seem young, but, in regard to the girls, menarche (the onset of menstruation) was the consideration, and there is evidence to show that in Greece puberty occurred on average between the ages of 13 and 14, with marriage quickly following (Cantarella 2002, 40 and 230 n. 90, citing funerary inscriptions).

In classical Greece 16 appears too young for these girls' husbands. The varied evidence available on the structuring and terminology of the life stages of young males (see the next section) points to this, carrying the implication that before the age of 18 they are simply not adults and therefore do not yet meet the conditions for marriage. One is inclined to suspect here a back-grounded accommodation to the pederastic system, which relied upon a supply of *meirakia/paides*, boys between the ages of 12 and 17, for a kind of secondment to *erōmenos* duty in an *erōmenos-erastēs* (beloved-lover) relationship, approved by the city as a metaeducation in which the younger male acquired a life coach (for the ages, see Cantarella 2002, 40). In a thriving pederastic culture, withdrawal for marriage reasons from the *erōmenos* pool at the age of 16, the *meirakion* gold standard, would be a waste not to be tolerated. In fact the bridegrooms' downward trending in our novels to 16 (an age more in keeping with Roman taste) is in itself a good indication that the *echt* pederastic culture of yesteryear has now yielded to new sets of social and romantic norms. Every bridegroom in our stories is 16 (with the exception noted), and every *erōmenos* is also 16; thus, by exploiting the conflicting functionalities of this particular age, the authors have the tool to ramp up the narrative tension on either side of the erotic divide, at the same time achieving for the homosexual narratives a credible stature, integration, and synergy within the main plots. Yet, even in the "modern" adaptation of the homosexual affair, the authors remain bound by vestigial pederastic convention to respect different, contiguous age categories for the male partners. While age distinctions are minimized by eliminating disparities of strength, taste, and influence, the last hurdle of true age parity, which would necessitate the abandonment of the "asymmetrical" paradigm entirely, is never crossed.

Male Ages, 1: The Evidentiary Setting

A pair of external resources offers good evidence for the ancient Greek construction of male age-based life categories and their age ranges. The first is the body of early poetry, science, and philosophy that consistently schematizes growth stages by heptads (seven-year segments) and assigns to each the years of tenancy and a principal physical (but not psychological) attribute; thus, for our purposes, *paidion*, child, 1–7, until teeth are shed; *pais*, boy, 8–14, until onset of puberty; *meirakion*, lad, 15–21, until hair covers the chin; *neaniskos*, young man, 22–28, until fully grown (see Colson and Whitaker 1929, 87 on Ph. Op. 35–6, citing Solon and Hippocrates). The second resource, one that is refreshingly empirical, exists in the regulations defining the age limits for contestants in the boys' events at Olympia (Crowther 2004, 87–92), combined with those governing punishments for improprieties in the gymnasium at Beroia (Macedonia) in the second century bce (Crowther 2004, 142–5). Crowther's assessment of this material in inscriptions and texts determines the age range for the boys' competition (*paidōn athlēsis*) at Olympia to be between 12 and 17 and establishes that at Beroia the punishment of flogging is reserved for males under 18, that is, boys; after this, as *ephēboi* (ephebes, 18 to 20) and *neoi*, *neaniskoi*, and *neōteroi* (20 to 30), they are assessed fines. Philo's sources, with their *meirakion* spread reaching as far as 21 (a *neaniskos* age at Beroia), prompt him to caution that full hair growth (*lachnōsis*) may occur at any time during that heptad (15 to 21), curtailing boyhood forthwith and ushering in the manhood phase earlier than the outside age specified for boys. This expediently acknowledges the discretion imposed by biological variance and mitigates the structural rigidity of the “perfective” heptadic system.

What Crowther's competition data shows rather well is the critical role of 18 in marking the technical transition from late boyhood to early manhood. This is a milestone that I perceive to be borne out in the Greek novels by the pains taken to range on either side of it the categories of *meirakion/pais* and *neos*. To illustrate this, I have devised a chart, “Ages of the Romantic Characters in the Selected Novels” (see [Table 29.1](#)), showing that more than a third of the boy beloveds, called *meirakia/paides/erōmenoi*, are stated to be either exactly 16 or “around” 16, and that no other age for them is advanced; while among the nine *erastai*, lovers, one is a confirmed 18 and another 20, again with no other age cited for an older male in such a partnership. This will provide sufficient data, I believe, to confirm a distinctive clustering of the ages that are privileged in the “modern” homoerotic

affair and to see in their convergence a bilateral dynamic: the *meirakia* are older, the *erastai* younger, than the discarded norms that classical pederasty prescribes. In this way the male pairs of lovers—Chariton's Chaireas and Polycharmus, Xenophon's Hyperanthes and Hippothous, and Tatius' *meirakion* and Menelaos—can all be accommodated within a span of two years, and Tatius' Charikles and Kleinias within four years. These are margins that replicate the heteroerotic ideal. Context is everything, and the hypothesis of a consistent ideal of the lovers' ages in the novels is not materially affected by extraneous usage in other texts and eras. As shown, *meirakion* conveys a range of ages and, if twinned with *neaniskos* in the same person (Antiphon 3.4.6, 8; Xen. *Mem.* 2.2.1 and Pl. *Ap.* 34d), it will denote role or status more immediately than age. One compares the modern use of “boy” or “boyfriend” in a similar sense. Then there is Pythagoras' puckish contribution: four stages of man, at twenty years each, for boy, youth, young man, and old man (DL 8.10 *pais eikosi etea*, *neaniskos eikosi*, *neēniēs eikosi*, *gerōn eikosi*).

Table 29.1 Ages of the Romantic Characters in the Selected Novels

(for erotic ties, read across) ^a	14 (<i>korai</i>)	16 (<i>meirakia/paidai</i>)	18 (<i>neoi</i>)	20	21+
CHARITON	Kallirhoe	Chaireas	Polycharmus		
XENOPHON	<u>Anthia</u>	<u>Habrokomes</u> Hyperanthes+ Kleisthenes	Hippothous	Korymbos	Hippothous
TATIUS	Leukippe		<u>Kleitophon</u>		Hippothous
		Charikles+ <i>meirakion</i> +	Menelaos	<u>Kleinias</u>	
LONGUS	Chloe	Daphnis		Gnathon	
PETRONIUS		<u>Giton</u>	Ascylltus Ascylltus	Encolpius Encolpius	

^aUnderlined names = age given, + = deceased

Male Ages, 2: The Witness of the Novels

Chaireas and Kallirhoe

In *Chaireas and Kallirhoe*, the earliest novel, Chariton sets the ideal, age-related descriptive pattern for young heterosexual lovers that is repeated throughout the genre. Kallirhoe is a young girl (*parthenos*),

and Chaireas a comely lad (*meirakion eumorphon*). Erōs catches both on the road to sexual maturity, as one is transitioning from girl to woman and the other from boy to man. For Kallirhoe this is straightforward: asexual to menarchic to mature; but for Chaireas it is fluid and ambiguous: as a beautiful youth, he must now face up to vacating his status as a cosseted *meirakion*, hardly asexual, for one more suited to a *neanias* (as he is called on one occasion): husband or *erastēs* (1.1). Homosexual material in this novel is scarce, and it all comes out now, in a short segment full of information and nuance (1.1–3). Given Chaireas' pretty boy looks, there is little reason to question the truth of his suitors' taunts about his *meirakion* complaisance at the gym, which are echoed by Kallirhoe herself. Polycharmos, too—cast in the role of Patroclus, Achilles' lover and squire, that is, a bit older (*andrikos*)—displays toward her all the antipathy typical of a jealous erotic rival (4.2).

Habrokomes and Anthia

In Xenophon's *Habrokomes and Anthia*, which shows descriptive and thematic resemblances to the preceding novel (Whitmarsh 2011), we find Habrokomes defined, like Chaireas, as a *meirakion* (1.2.1), and a *pais* (1.1.5), but with the new information that he is “around 16” (1.2 *peri ta hexkaideka*), clearly an age of prime marriageability, since he and Anthia (who is at a now specified 14) attend, separately, a festival employed as a marriage market. The iconic value of those ages for boy and girl is confirmed by their exact recurrence in Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe*, and it may be reasonable to infer, from the web of associations, the sixteenish and fourteenish character of the ages of our initial protagonists, Chaireas and Kallirhoe. Anthia and Habrokomes are now hastily married, spend a passionate wedding night, and set sail on the morrow, in essence to visit a number of prophesied hazards; these commence with seizure by pirates, an event that will elucidate the gender intrigue relevant to the theme of sexual competition. One of the pirates, the tall and fearsome lieutenant Korymbos, happens to be, in romantic mitigation, a *neanias*; and he falls in love with Habrokomes, the *meirakion* whom fate has put in his way. A subordinate, Euxinos, falls in love with Anthia, the lesser prize. The pirates agree to try individually to talk whichever of the young people they are not interested in into submitting sexually to the other. Euxinos' “good word” to Habrokomes on behalf of Korymbos, is a classic of cynical tripartite advocacy in the pseudopederaestic vein (amounting to a parody of it) while engaging in human predation: (1) Korymbos is in love with you (and that can only be good); (2) he is

ready to make you master of his worldly possessions (even better); (3) at your age you hardly need a female for a lover, let alone a wife and complications (1.16). With the sexual options laid out, the pirates are obliged to leave and danger dissipates.

A new robber chief, Hippothous, is suddenly upon the scene, with Anthia as his booty (a plot necessity), about to be sacrificed to Ares. He will be a significant, protean figure, the author of a less direct bid for the detachment of Habrokomes from his lady-love. In a skirmish with the Cilician authorities Anthia is rescued from the brigands, only to be taken to Tarsus as a virtual prisoner, while Hippothous alone manages to escape to his cave. Nearby he chances upon Habrokomes, whose potential as both a lover and a new recruit is quickly grasped from his combination of youthful good looks and robust build, decked out in soldier's gear (2.14 *hoplismenos*; see 1.2, his earlier training in *hoplomachia*; ...*horō gar se, ō meirakion, ...kai ophthēnai kalon kai allōs andrikon*: “I see, young man, ...that you are handsome to look at and manly besides”).

Some days later, during a revel, Hippothous breaks down and, in return for a promise by Habrokomes to reciprocate, crafts an alluring tale of his tragic circumstances: there was a love affair, a touchstone of homoerotic pathos. As a newly minted young man (*neos ōn*), while visiting a gymnasium in his home town of Perinthus, he lost his heart ineluctably to a handsome local lad (*meirakion kalon*) called Hyperanthes, who had impressed him with the sight of his spirited wrestling (*diapalaionta*). He implored Hyperanthes to have compassion (*katoikteirai*), and out of pity the boy “promised everything” (3.2, *panta hupischneitai kateleēsan me*). In time, the early snatched moments of emotive contact in public, Hippothous continues, gave way to a long intimacy, abetted by the lovers' closeness in age and an unsuspecting populace: “and the issue of our respective ages roused no suspicion. And for a long time we were in a relationship of deep mutual affection” (*kai to tēs hēlikias allēlois anupopton ēn. Kai chronōi sunēmen pollōi stergontes allēlous diapherontōs*). This rare and quite circumspect reference to relative ages in a youthful, homoerotic friendship has proved difficult to contextualize, to judge from opposing translations: “ages the same and not suspicious” (Hadas 1953, 95; Anderson in Reardon 1989, 147; Konstan 1994a, 28); “ages not the same and not suspicious” (Henderson 2009, 281); “ages not the same and suspicious” (Konstan 2007, 37, emending the text to make it consistent with the unfounded view that at Perinthus the lovers' affair ran into extreme difficulty). Yet there is little room for equivocation concerning ages, dynamic, or sense (if the present study is a guide), since Hippothous himself supplies all the information required: he is a self-described *neos*, in youthful looks the image of his

friend, an actual *meirakion* and *pais* (Xen. Eph. *Habr.* 3.1.2, 3.1.10). Thus he is 18, on the cusp of manhood; while Hyperanthes is around 16, the *meirakion* gold standard for lovers so defined, both homo- and heteroerotic. Not technically the same age, the young males looked the same age, which abetted the framing of their friendship as pre-romantic and pre-sexual, and in turn calmed parental concerns about possible entanglement in a stratified same-sex liaison that could derail marriage plans.

But suddenly, Hippothous resumes, there came out of nowhere the anti-Hippothous, a formidable rival who was significantly older, as he establishes with a flurry of age freighted status markers: “one of the leading men in Byzantium ...proud of his wealth and prosperity”: a seasoned corrupter and self-proclaimed skilled rhetorician. Hippothous murdered him, with the consent of Hyperanthes, and the pair fled by ship for Asia. It capsized in a storm, and the boy was drowned. Hippothous, a double murderer, decided not to return home and entered a life of foreign outlawry, a career of a few years' standing; for he has acquired bandit seniority while retaining credentials as a lover, and the memory of his affair is still fresh. He is thus now in his early twenties. His narrative concluded, Hippothous, calling Habrokomes his best friend (3.2, *ō philtate*), waits hopefully on the younger man's story—and surely a disappointment it is, for he is “out in three strikes”: (1) Habrokomes had fallen in love with a girl; (2) he had married her; and (3) she is missing but still alive and close, as Hippothous can personally confirm. This ends the flirtation, and he manfully promises to help the separated lovers find each other. Some time later, as the complexities of the plot unfold, we find that Hippothous has not forgotten the romantic possibilities posed by Habrokomes and hopes he will encounter him again, in circumstances that tempt Habrokomes to share his life (5.9).

Meanwhile new opportunity arrives, in which the resourceful Hippothous is seen to employ a formula for a pseudopederaestic plot that actually works. In Tauromenium he has the luck to have an old woman with a large fortune fall in love with him. Though marriage is implicitly distasteful, he decides to marry her anyway, out of a necessity imposed by his current penury; and after a brief togetherness she dies, leaving him wealth for every luxury (5.9). His first thought is to find Habrokomes and to offer to “share with him his whole way of life and wealth” (the deal-making prenuptial that we have met before in the offer of Korymbos to Habrokomes). Yet within a sentence we find he has acquired a new traveling companion, a well-born Sicilian *meirakion* called Kleisthenes, an alternative prospect for “sharing all his possessions, the handsome boy” (5.9). He is not done yet. On the shores of Italy he encounters Anthia: she looks familiar but he cannot

place her. He falls in love and wants to take her to bed. In desperation, she pours out her past, in which it is revealed she is Anthia, wife of his former best friend and thus safe from his attentions. With a return to Ephesus in prospect, Habrokomes independently and Hippothous with Anthia (and Kleisthenes) run into each other felicitously in Rhodes, the prior landing, where they can now rehearse their future sleeping arrangements: Hippothous with Kleisthenes, Anthia with Habrokomes. On the next day it was off to Ephesus together, all to live in the same city, with Kleisthenes lured by the wealthy Hippothous into respectable permanence through adoption as his son.

Leukippe and Kleitophon

Tatius' *Leukippe and Kleitophon* treats at length and graphically, even titillatingly, the sexual aspects of the two kinds of erotic partnership described in the narratives of the first two novels with sentimental discretion. Thus the election of boy or girl moves from a relationship necessity born of romantic circumstance and impulse (love) to a libidinal assignation based on preference (a fling). Further, the act of first lovemaking, whether to boy or to girl, no longer instinctive and sweet, is described in unfamiliar language, as an "initiation into the mysteries." To mark this shift, Tatius puts the sexual "rivals" in open competition, not so much to find a cogent winner or advocate for this or that lover as to try his hand at a salacious party game celebrating differing tastes and choices. If this sounds sardonic, it is part of the sophisticated fun that informs this later novel, and a claim to making a parody of its predecessors is as valid for *Leukippe and Kleitophon* as it is for the *Satyrিকা*. The entire story is framed by Kleitophon's perspective as he narrates his erotic trials to the purported author, Tatius himself. Sophistication in retrospect is one thing, but even in the progression of Kleitophon's life we detect the swagger of the self-promoting dilettante, abetted by Tatius' choice of the "I"-narration format, under which all the data reach the reader via Kleitophon's perspective, more truthy than true. Leukippe is a young maiden (*parthenos*), thus standardized to 14, the age of Kallirhoe, Anthia, and Chloe. Kleitophon is a young man, *neaniskos*, as judged by the author, who meets him—that is, he is in the category just beyond the *meirakion* stage of Chaireas and Habrokomes. In fact he is given as being in the ninth year of his teens, 18, and already, *in situ*, with experience of women of the commercial kind (2.37—unless he is lying), if not with young women in love. He will thus be inclined to confuse the two kinds, to be an impatient pupil in the art of seduction,

and to adopt a predatory perspective on first sight of Leukippe—all of which will help him later to evade the paradox of championing the female sexual response from a position of ignorance. Leukippe, in contrast, is exactly like Kallirhoe and Anthia at start: a young girl (*korē*), a virgin (*parthenos*)—and such she will remain, despite the best efforts of many a male, Kleitophon included, until the last paragraph and its perfunctory wedding note. As with Chloe, her innocence is highlighted by her need to call upon her male partner to explain one of those myths of male sexual violence, this time the rape of Philomela. So this is not about a virgin pair, quickly married and sexually united, sailing in equipoise through their adventures, separated but in mutual thrall. And it would be difficult to claim their sexual equalization when the plot hinges upon the potential consequences of the male–female biological distinction. The age gap is here at its largest, 18 to 14; and Kleitophon pointedly takes Apollo for his role model, in the sexy myth of Apollo and Daphne, which stirs in him not love, but lust for his own Daphne (1.5 *epithumia*). For advice on the seduction technique apparently required he seeks out his cousin Kleinias, two years older, thus a confirmed 20 and “already an initiate in the rites of love”—though it is unclear of which sort, since Kleinias is presently well into a relationship with a *meirakion*, Charikles, to whom he was giving a horse.

At this point Charikles runs up animatedly. Bad news: his father is marrying him off to a maiden (*korē*), an ugly one. This places the *meirakion* around 16, on the basis of status markers, marriageability, and an appropriate gap of about three years between himself and Kleinias. The lovers glumly trade remarks on the vexation of women, surely precocious in Charikles' case. But the younger's mood seems to brighten at the prospect of his horse ride, and he departs with engaging insouciance, considering the separation's imminence. “We have time,” he says (1.8, *chronos estin*). While he is gone, Kleinias proffers to Kleitophon lengthy directions, psychologically astute but cynical, for his (heterosexual) project of seducing Leukippe. Before the matter can be settled of what to do in the event of success, since Kleitophon is promised to another, a slave of Charikles runs in to announce his master's death in a riding accident, which Tatius has him then recount with such callous relish, followed by the showing of the mangled corpse, that we suspect a caricature of tragic pederastic happenstance—or a send-up of the messenger with bad news. For the delivery of the news of the beloved's death is in marked contrast with the other lovers' personal accounts, which are notable for seductive sentiment and restraint. The tragedy silences Kleinias, who does not reappear until much later, at the end of a long, fruitless effort by Kleitophon to get Leukippe past the kissing stage. At this juncture the

useful Kleinias—having dodged punishment for his beloved's death, his own grief being sufficient, or perhaps because he was not present at the scene—promotes a plan for all to slip out of Sidon, Alexandria-bound. The trio board ship and set sail.

At breakfast, a fellow passenger and *neaniskos* called Menelaos shares his story with the lads. Leukippe is a late sleeper in a corner of the deck, and her virgin ears will be kept clear of no less than three love accounts, those of Menelaos, Kleinias, and Kleitophon about her, and of the erotic debate which will follow. Three years earlier, presumably also a *neaniskos* (perhaps then 18 and now 21), Menelaos had fallen in love with an unnamed *meirakion* (likely around 16, by analogy with the other *meirakia*), an athletic, risk-taking boy who loved to hunt (2.34). They went out on horseback in search of harmless creatures but were surprised by a breaking boar that made straight for the *meirakion*, rider and horse. In defense, Menelaos hurled his javelin—into whose path the boy rode. The parents prosecuted; Menelaos was exiled; with sentence served, he is now on his way home. Menelaos will join the others in Egypt, and “that fine young man” (5.15, *neaniskos panu chrēstos*) eventually sees them off at dockside, bound for Ephesus.

Two of these shipboard stories treat of boy love and one of girl love, reflecting the present opposite preoccupations, even orientations, of the three young men. Though conceding a two against one, Kleitophon suggests a debating contest, with a proposition defended by himself and opposed by the well-qualified Menelaos: “Resolved: Females [*gunaikes*] Make Better Sex Partners than Males [*paides*].” Kleitophon opens, and indeed rests with, a frank account of female sexual response and the approach of orgasm, employing observational data that would not be out of place in the lab notes of a modern sex researcher (2.37). Menelaos counters with a pulled punch: the clinch in public on the wrestling mat, followed by a few sturdy kisses. This is a limp performance, in effect a quick and decorous concession in the face of Kleitophon's astonishing case, for Menelaos is apparently not at liberty to match it with competing detail on erotic contact with boys. The passionate woman naturally bears little resemblance to the chastely dozing Leukippe.

Daphnis and Chloe

In Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe* it remains to treat Gnathon's “love” for Daphnis, who turns 16 during the story. This is a good example of a pseudopederaestic evocation of the more decadent, cynical sort, which thinly disguises attempted rape. Unlike the other (non-pirate) lovers,

whom he resembles in age, Gnathon is meant to be unappealing: he lacks good looks, and his blunt, indiscriminate appetite for all forms of fleshly pleasure (eating, drinking, and fornicating) can prompt only distaste. Still, he tries to maintain an insider's credential by being "naturally inclined to boys" (4.11, *phusei paiderastēs ōn*), and there is no better evidence of how far the ideal can fall. Daphnis will have no part of it; thus persuasion fails and rape founders because he is strong (*ischuros*).

To conclude the Greek section, the themes and details of treatment that make a cohesive, confident microcorpus of the homoerotic narratives—analogue lovers, beloveds, emotions, incidents, outcomes, exiles, and even resolutions—are their own best evidence of a robust, free-standing cultural artifact of some appeal and merit. The genre's principal, unifying aim is to report two sides of an entertaining romantic fantasy, a reverie, on the onset of erotic love and its practical consequences; and how it strikes pairs of young people variously, in a sudden, alchemical reaction to the allure of human physical beauty coupled with emotional receptivity. The phenomenon can be neither anticipated nor resisted ("*ouk ekarterēsa*," says Hippothous at Xen. Eph. *Habr.* 3.2), still less explained, except in terms of divine visitation. It is therefore safely beyond the reach of instructive use.

Satyrica

Critical investigation of power disparities has its echo in the *Satyrica*, with a fund of new material supplied by gender displacement issues. David Konstan (1994a, 120) offers a challenging perspective on Tryphaina as honorary male, the "anomalous ...female *erastēs*," vis-à-vis Giton, in mimicry of "the asymmetrical structure that is encoded in conventional Greek conceptions of erotic attraction." The word *erastēs* is said by him not to be used of women (rare instances exist). It does not occur here, of course, but in the Greek novels cognate forms are common in this regard. In Xenophon three women, Manto (2.3 *ērasthē tou Habrokomou*), Hippothous' elderly wife (5.9, *ērasthē presbutis*), and Anthia herself (1.4 *par' hēlikian erō*, "I'm too young to fall in love!"), prove the viability of the root to convey female *erōs*. This is an old idea: compare *thelokratēs erōs*, the passion that sways women, at Aeschylus, *Choephoroi* 599. Tryphaina too can love assertively without putting her distinctive femininity at risk.

Peregrinus amor (Sat. 80.8)

The *Satyrica* of Petronius is a well pawed grab-bag of parodic tricks, and its Greek and Roman literary antecedents are on prominent display. In the later nineteenth century, at the dawn of Petronian literary criticism, the contest was on among European scholars to identify its roots and interrelations. From our perspective, Heinze may have won his debate with Collignon and Rohde through his support for the Greek novel, extant and antecedent; and he identified parody as the principal link. At the heart of the Greek novels and the *Satyrica*, he plausibly argued, was the romantic pair, *Liebespaar*; and Petronius' most impudent touch (*die frechste Frechheit*) was to inflict Encolpius and Giton upon the reader in that role (Heinze 1899, 495–6). Although he had no further use for this observation, and although his section on parody was not to commence until several pages thereafter and it concerned itself with parody of tone, especially within Encolpius' self-presentation (Heinze 1899, 502), the two sections, on gender substitution and on parody, have been almost universally conflated by modern critics. More often than not, on the authority of Heinze, the *Satyrica* is read as a none too friendly sex parody of the Greek novels, its principal comic trigger being the replacement of the latter's risible heterosexual sentimentality with a scrappy and worldly (homo)-eroticism (Konstan 1994a, 113–16; Richlin 2009, 94–5; resisted by Morgan 2009, 44–5, though extending Heinze a little).

There may be a parodic fount for the *Satyrica*, but any role for homosexuality as a foil for the heterosexuality of the Greek novel, even one as a purely literary artifact, is diminished by two considerations. First, in the Greek novels themselves, parody of situation and parody of characters—the manipulation, exaggeration, and perversion, for a humorous and perhaps satirical purpose, of stock story-telling themes in the ambit of heterosexual love—are already present. Tatius' *Leukippe and Kleitophon* is the best example, but already in Xenophon's *Habrokomes and Anthia* there is a facetiousness that plays against the sobriety or pseudo-sobriety of the elegant, understated novels of Chariton and Longus. Parody of a parody is not very funny; thus parody of these affairs in the *Satyrica* would only be a viable comic tool if the Greek genre were sentimental through and through, which it is not. Second, in these novels homosexual narratives already exist and are given literary definition and substance. As such, they present a target in their own right, important enough to be caricatured for comedic ends. I would suggest, further, that one key feature in the mythic lives of the pseudopederaestic lovers links the Roman author with the Greek: the focus upon statelessness and a life of deracination and drift. We have seen the signal part it

plays in our samples of the homoerotic Greek narrative, as the lover, bereaved by the death of the beloved, for which he is responsible, goes into jail or exile and consequent brigandage, out of need for money—to stay alive. What better scenarios to imitate and re-imagine humorously, in the Latin lovers' undignified flight, followed by the unraveling of their dodgy lives on the run? Thus the *louche* entanglements of Encolpius, Giton, and Ascyltus, the latter plot-bustingly the beloved of one and lover of the other, are the true reverse, not of the boy-girl affairs, but of the sentimental love-loss-exile homoerotic narratives of Hippothous, Kleinias, and Menelaos. There is even a comparable drowning on the high seas, with Encolpius' mawkish mourning for his enemy, Lichas, doing duty as Hippothous' sad lament.

In the outline, then, the *Satyrica* presents the adventures abroad of this triangle of homoerotic lovers, joined considerably far along—in *ultimas res*—owing to the loss of most of the preceding story. Although these conditions will restrict our confidence in any comprehensive theory, some cross-reference leftovers from the *Satyrica*'s earlier episodes, plus the facts of the protagonists' present existence, point to a series of thematic resemblances between the Greek and the Roman exile narratives: male lovers emotionally challenged; major crime and scandal; punishment and escape; *de facto* condemnation to a life on the road; penury and the need to survive on the avails of criminality, not to mention body and wits, as anonymously as possible; closure and, finally, the prospect of a god-vouchsafed *bios makarios*, a happy ever-after. The prior, lost episodes may not have altered this program, since the novel, to judge from its extant Greek examples, is a genre of episodic story-telling, extending cumulatively in linear progression as far as the imagination and inventiveness of the authors dictate.

Guide to Further Reading

This chapter's choice of focus has meant the exclusion of two major novels: the *Aethiopica* of Heliodorus and the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius. For the different sexual ethic of the *Aethiopica*, see Morgan 1996; and Apuleius' treatment of the sex and magic addiction of his alter-ego, Lucius, as person and ass, is but an entry into the worldly sexual array, on which see Winkler 1985. In the domain of interrelations between the Greek novels and the *Satyrica*, parody, form, and dating, Laird 2007 keeps an open mind, though he would have benefitted from Flobert 2003. He bides a while usefully with Heinze 1899, yet refreshes Heinze's program as presenting “the antics

of a homosexual couple ...on the canvas of a lowlife scenario” (Laird 2007, 152). For evidence from the visual arts and literature for Greek and Roman homosexual practice, see Dover 1978 and Williams 1999, respectively. Williams is at pains to carve out a divide, reflecting the different influences of Greek pederastic culture and of the Roman cult of emphatic masculinity. On the protocols of classical pederasty, see Cantarella 2002. Whitmarsh 2011, 161–2 offers a corrective to scholars' readings of gay subplots. For the Greek novels, Reardon 1989 is a one-stop source, now with a new special introduction by Morgan to supplement Reardon's, plus a translator's preface for each. Lalanne 2006, 66–97 provides a guide to the age-based semiotics of the Greek novels: ages, terms, categories and functions of the protagonists, lovers, and fellow travelers; and relation to social realities of the day. For narratological links between Tatius' *Leukippe and Kleitophon* and the *Satyricon* of Petronius, see Morgan 2007. Morales' (2008) overview of the sex and sexual reception of the novels touches effectively on many issues. Rinaldo's (1987) ethnographic investigation of sexual asymmetry as a universal fact of human societies is of relevance. Richlin's (2009) recent chapter on sex in the *Satyricon* contains incisive views.

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Chapter 30

Sexual Themes in Greek and Latin Graffiti

Craig Williams

Introduction

The term *graffito* (plural *graffiti*; from Italian *graffiare*, “scratch”) refers to texts and images scratched with a metal stylus or other hard object into natural surfaces such as rocks or cliffs, or into artifacts not primarily designed to receive them, such as pottery fragments or plaster walls; when painted on the surface rather than scratched into it, such texts and images are called *dipinti* in specialist studies, but here as elsewhere these will be considered a type of *graffito*. Graffiti are thus distinguished not only from literary texts written on papyrus scrolls, but also from formal inscriptions carved into stone and bronze tablets, and from letters and other personal documents written on scrolls or small tablets designed for the purpose. Greek and Latin graffiti have been discovered everywhere those languages were spoken, from the Near East and Egypt to Spain and Britain, over the entire chronological range of alphabetic writing, from the eighth century bce onward. Many thousands of examples survive: no comprehensive statistic is available, but over 7,500 have been found on the walls of Pompeii alone—a city that, due to the unique circumstances of its preservation in the course of the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 ce, necessarily takes a prominent position in any discussion of ancient graffiti. There wall writing was so common as to generate self-referential commentary. A couplet has been found written on walls in three different public spaces: “I am surprised, O wall, that you have not collapsed; / you have to put up with the tedious words of so many writers!” (*CIL* 4.1904, 2461, 2487).

Most surviving graffiti are in prose, but a considerable number are in verse, and their language and motifs are closely related to those of the literary tradition (Gigante 1979, Wachter 1998, Milnor 2009). The range of subject matter is impressive. Especially common are graffiti that have the simple but eloquent function of communicating “I was here,” but we also find more detailed messages of all kinds: inventories, shopping lists and records of payment, insults and jokes, poems and literary quotations. Mingled in with all of these are many hundreds of graffiti with sexual content, ranging from blunt messages using primary obscenities to more elaborate texts that poetically meditate on desire and love.

Issues of Interpretation

Many of the issues raised by Greek and Latin graffiti are familiar to readers of ancient literature. To begin with, there is the question of literacy. Although there are different kinds and degrees of literacy, and in antiquity the ability to read and write must have fluctuated between times and places, in general it is safe to say that the literacy rate in the Greek and Roman cultural spheres was much lower than it is in the western world today. Only a minority of people will have been capable of writing and reading the texts I discuss in this chapter. But that minority was not homogeneous, since literacy capabilities were not neatly aligned with distinctions in gender or social standing. Many slaves could read and write (some of them were trained precisely for that purpose), while many free-born people could not, especially among the masses of urban poor or farmers; most graffiti seem to have been written by men, but women's voices are sometimes heard. In short, those who wrote and read graffiti constituted a small sample of the population, which cut across social distinctions and gender, and this sample only partially overlaps with the writers and readers of Greek and Latin literature.

Reading and interpreting these messages today, on the other side of a gulf in time, culture, and language, we face a number of challenges. The graffiti are fragmentary in more ways than one. Many survive only in part, and many—exposed to the elements as they are—have become barely legible, or even have completely disappeared since they were transcribed and published for the first time. Surviving graffiti are also fragmentary in the sense that they represent some very small portion of the original production: we must be careful about making absolute statements about what does (or does not) appear in ancient graffiti. Their language, too, often departs from the

morphology, syntax, and lexicon of literary Greek and Latin, and our knowledge of non-literary and colloquial registers in those two languages is fragmentary. In short, graffiti writing constitutes a speech genre of its own, different not only from the various genres of the literary tradition, but also from the language of formal inscriptions, and we have only partial knowledge of this genre's rules, its lexicon and formulas, its constraints on what could be said and how.

Most graffiti are brief and direct, both literally and metaphorically incisive, and precisely these features further complicate interpretation. Nearly all of the names that appear are nothing more than this for us: names. A simple declaration that X loves Y might have been written by either of the two parties or by someone else, and, if the latter, it might be an act of ridicule or exposure (if Y, for example, was notoriously unattractive, or married, or otherwise fuel for scandal). A graffito announcing that someone can be had for a certain price may indeed be the advertisement it purports to be, but it might be a joking or malevolent act of exposure aimed at someone who is not actually a prostitute: "For a good time, call ..." In general, impersonation and ventriloquism, idle boasting, daydreaming and outright lying are always possibilities, and tone can be especially elusive. Humor in particular is one of the least translatable features of cultural and linguistic systems: for scholarly readers there is a real danger of taking the messages of graffiti too seriously.

A common type of graffiti announces that something happened "here"; this simplicity, too, can be deceptive. A couplet whose first line reads "We were eager to come here, but now are more eager to leave" has been found written on the wall in several different places in Pompeii (*CIL* 4.1227, 2995, 6697, 8231a, 9849; in one instance, 8891, the first phrase alone appears, and is signed by Cornelius Martialis) but also in Narbonne, France (*AE* 1997, 1068). A coarser formula ("Here I fucked a girl ...") opens poems with varying endings insulting to the girl, which have been found in the Baths of Titus in Rome, in Pompeii, and in a house in southern Spain (see below). The fact that these and comparable graffiti are poems using formulaic language need hardly mean that they do not memorialize something that really happened nearby; but in any given case it is also possible that what we have before us is a quotation not anchored in a specific place and time. It is more tempting to interpret prose announcements, especially those that give details such as names and dates, as commemorating something that really did happen then and there, though here, too, the possibility of fantasy or idle boasting must always be kept in mind. A number of messages of this kind have been found on the walls of Pompeii: "I had a fuck [*futui*] here on August 14—and August 20" (*CIL* 4.4260); "On the eleventh day before the Kalends of December in the

consulship of Marcus Messalla and Lucius Lentulus (= November 21, 3 bce), Epaphra, Acutus and Auctus brought a woman named Tyche to this place; the price was 5 *asses* for each, for a total of 15 *asses*” (*CIL* 4.2450). Sometimes we find such messages clustered together (for example in the *Thermae Maritimae* at Herculaneum, *CIL* 4.10674–80): possibly indeed a record of repeat visits, but possibly, to some extent, a copy-cat phenomenon.

Perhaps surprisingly for modern readers, ancient graffiti have been found on the interior walls of homes of all kinds, ranging from imperial residences in the very heart of Rome (Solin and Itkonen-Kaila 1966, Castrén and Lilius 1970) to private homes of all types, from Hellenistic houses on Delos (Langner 2001, 94–5) to a first- or second-century ce home in southern Spain (Marín 1959, Gil 1979–80). In houses at Pompeii graffiti have been found on nearly every kind of interior surface. The highest concentration have been found in the spaces frequented by inhabitants and visitors alike—in entryways, in dining rooms, and along the columns and walls lining gardens—but many graffiti were also scratched on the walls of bedrooms (*cubicula*). They were written at various heights: many of them at shoulder level, but some at waist height, perhaps written while reclining on a couch, and a few quite close to the floor. Nor is there any evidence that writing such texts was subject to social taboo or legal penalization. In other words, conceptions of domestic space, its acceptable uses, and its differentiation from public space were on key points different from those prevailing in the modern West (Wallace-Hadrill 1994, Zanker 1998), and graffiti writing in Greek and Roman antiquity seems to have been a widespread form of communication that did not have the allure of the illicit, illegal, rebellious, or subversive that it has generally had in the modern world. Comparisons with graffiti from contemporary western urban landscapes—almost entirely a phenomenon of public or semi-public spaces (building façades, walls of train stations, library cubicles, college bathrooms), and in tension with socially privileged concepts of private property and public order—must therefore be undertaken with great caution.¹

A noticeable feature of many Greek and Latin verse graffiti is their use of formulas that seem to be building-blocks in a repertory of oral poetry (Wachter 1998). One such formula consists of the words “Whoever is in love ...” (*quisquis amat*). The phrase opens an elegiac couplet that has been found several times, in part or whole, on the walls of Pompeii: “Whoever is in love—bravo! To hell with whoever does not know how to love. And to hell twice over with whoever forbids love” (*CIL* 4.4091, 3199, 5272, 8745, 9130; concretely illustrating the couplet's status as portable composition, it appears as the text depicted on the image of a papyrus scroll in a wall painting,

CIL 4.1173). Other Pompeian graffiti opening with the formula conclude on a bitter note: “Whoever is in love—can go to hell!” (*CIL* 4.4659, 4663, 5186); “Whoever is in love—come and listen: I want to smash Venus’ ribs!” (*CIL* 4.1824; cf. 4.4200). These and other formulas, and poetic compositions using them, could and did travel far. A couplet beginning with the “Whoever is in love” formula and meditating on the financial loss that can be caused by loving boys or girls has been found not only on a wall of the Domus Aurea in Rome (Solin and Volpe 1980, 87), but also on a locally produced vase at the very edges of the Roman world, at Remagen, Germany (*CLE* 2153).

In short, Greek and Latin graffiti can be used as evidence for what people did and where they did it—but only in a qualified way. A fuller and more productive reading of this material considers how people writing in this medium *represented* what they and others did, or were, or wanted. Paying attention to recurring words, images, themes, noting what is largely or entirely absent, asking ourselves what kinds of actions and behaviors are praised, blamed, or made the subject of jokes, and with what words, we can consider what the graffiti suggest about the cultural systems of meaning shared by their readers and writers.

If we do so, we find that graffiti generally tell the same stories as those we find in the Greek and Latin literary traditions, from Homer through late antiquity. The voice of the sexually dominant male prevails, though not entirely; women appear most prominently as objects of male desire, and (with perhaps one or two exceptions to which we will return), when they are subjects of desire, they desire males. Men’s appreciation of both male and female beauty is a common theme, and it is normal for men to express desire for both male and female partners, ideally young; at the same time, there is a tradition of misogynistic invective. The normative male role in sexual acts is to penetrate others; men who find pleasure in being penetrated are liable to mockery as effeminate. All of the preceding features are common to both Greek and Latin cultural traditions; features specific to one or the other are also detectable. Greek pederastic ideals, for example, inform graffiti that publicly praise young men’s beauty, while Latin graffiti illustrate the concrete specificity of the Latin sexual vocabulary, with its attention to the question of who penetrates whom and how, and above all with its noticeable preoccupation with oral sex.

Themes

Praising, proclaiming, boasting

Among the first uses to which the new communicative technique of alphabetic writing was put in the Greek-speaking world was the carving of private messages in public spaces. Perhaps as early as the late eighth century bce, graffiti were carved into boulders on the island of Thera or Santorini (IG xii 3.536–601). Some of these are messages of praise, commending men as skilled dancers or simply as “good” (*agathos*; perhaps with the connotation “good-looking,” if the adjective is the local equivalent of the Athenian term *kalos*, to which we will return), but there is also a fragmentary message announcing that someone is in love with Phanokles (542: [*Ph*]ano[*kl*]eōs *eratai*). And then there are these: “—by Delphinios, Krimon had sex [*ōiphe*] here with Bathykles' son, brother of—” (537); “Krimon had sex with Amotion here” (538b); “Pheidippidas had sex. Timagoras and Empheres and I had sex. Empylos (wrote) this—[*in a different hand*] Whore [*pornos*]! Empedokles carved this, and he danced, by Apollo” (536).² These graffiti are intriguing not only because of their early date, but also because of their location near a temple to Apollo. In an influential 1907 essay arguing that Greek pederasty, at least as practiced in the Dorian cultural sphere, constituted an initiatory ritual of some kind, Erich Bethe argues that the graffito just quoted had the function of announcing that, “at a holy site, invoking Apollo Delphinios, Krimon here consummated his relationship with Bathykles' son” (Bethe 1907, 450). A more recent interpretation emphasizes that the temple was built some time after these graffiti were written and, pointing to the presence of the insulting *pornos* and arguing that a nearby open area was used for athletic training, concludes that these are “the normal, secular type of graffiti found in gymnasia or public areas frequented by youth” (Scanlon 2003, 84).

In any case, the combination of public celebration of male beauty and references to sexual acts is characteristic of the Greek pederastic tradition, and it is in connection with this tradition that numerous graffiti found elsewhere in the Greek world invite being read. On the island of Thasos, for example, fourth-century bce graffiti carved on rocks and boulders attach epithets ranging from “beautiful” (*kalos*) to “golden,” “beautiful,” and “sweet” to a variety of male names (Garlan 1982). In Athens, besides the “*kalos* inscriptions” praising young men's beauty on archaic and classical vase paintings (not, strictly speaking, graffiti since they were designed as part of the artistic creation and incised before the vase was fired), messages scratched on pottery fragments in the archaic and classical periods have been excavated in the agora. The subject matter of these graffiti (written *after* the pottery vessels had been fired, often after they had been broken) ranges from

inventory and shopping lists to brief messages praising beauty, by no means exclusively in a pederastic constellation. Both male and female names appear, and male beauty attracts admirers of both sexes: “Menekrates [masc.] is beautiful [*kalos*] and dear [*philos*] to Lysikles [masc.]” (Lang 1976, C7); “Antheme [fem.] is beautiful (*kalē*)” (C3); “Melis [fem.] thinks Alkaios [masc.] is beautiful [*kalos*]” (Lang 1976, C19).

The Greek tradition of pederasty, with its celebration of free-born young men's charms in a variety of media, has no exact counterpart in Roman culture, but allusions to beauty and desirability are of course found in Latin graffiti. On the walls of Pompeii we find the poetic wish that Sabina may perpetually maintain her youthful beauty (*CIL* 4.9171 = *CLE* 2059), as well as the phrase “charming ways” (*bellis moribus*) attached to both male and female names—most of them available for a price (*CIL* 4.4023–4, the female slave Felicla and a male named Menander, each for 2 *asses*). More bluntly, one Pompeian graffito (*CIL* 4.8473) uses the expressive feminine epithet *culibonia* (“great ass”), and a masculine counterpart *culipetrus* (“rock-hard ass”) appears among the graffiti scratched on a wall of the Basilica degli Argentari in Rome (Della Corte 1933, 117). These adjectives—assuming they have been correctly deciphered—are otherwise unattested and give us tantalizing glimpses at colloquial language.

Besides statements of praise, many graffiti in Greek and Latin, as in other languages, make declarations such as these: “Marcus loves [*amat*] Spendusa,” “Marcellus loves Praenestina but she's ignoring him,” “Restitutus has often broken many a girl's heart” (*CIL* 4.7086, 4.7679, 4.5251). These three examples from the walls of Pompeii illustrate the kinds of important but unanswerable questions that so many graffiti pose. Were these written by Marcus (or Spendusa), Marcellus (or Praenestina), Restitutus (or one of his girlfriends), or someone else entirely? Are these boasts, complaints, or expressions of admiration? Other kinds of declaration raise their own interpretive questions. Some graffiti using obscene language to place men in the normatively masculine role of penetrator invite being read as macho boasts, especially when in the first person: “I fucked the barmaid” (*CIL* 4.8442: *futui coponam*, written on a wall outside of a building in Pompeii that may have functioned as a tavern); “I fucked ass six times” (*CIL* 4.4523: *pedicavi VI*, written on a wall inside the so-called Casa di Orfeo in the same city). But the tone of other graffiti is more elusive: “Felix the ass-fucker” for example, or “Ephesus the fucker” (Solin 232: *Felix pedico*, from the Paedagogium on the Palatine Hill in Rome; *CIL* 4.1503: *Ephesus fututor*, from the portico of a house along the via della Fortuna in Pompeii). Are these boasts written by the men themselves, as a kind of signature; admiring comments written by

others; verbal acts of exposure; some combination of these; or something else yet again?

Insulting and exposing

Many Greek and Latin graffiti have a perceptibly aggressive quality, hurling insults or otherwise exposing the individuals they name. Misogynistic invective of a kind that pervades the literary tradition, aimed at women's bodies in general and at their genitalia in particular, shows up in graffiti too; such is the announcement, written on a wall in a house in Pompeii, that a woman named Euplia has a loose vagina and an oversized clitoris (*CIL* 4.10004: *Eupl(i)a laxa landicosa*),³ or the elegiac couplets beginning with the formula “Here I fucked a girl ...” and proceeding to add insult, found on a streetside façade in Pompeii (*CIL* 4.1516 = *CLE* 955: “but inside was filth”) or on the wall of an early second-century ce home in southern Spain (Marín 1959, Gil 1979–80: “I nearly died of cold in her cunt”; for variations, see *CLE* 1810 from the Baths of Titus in Rome, *CIL* 4.1517 from Pompeii). Insulting to both women and men and aggressive in a uniquely concrete way are the so-called *glandes Perusinae*, sling bullets used by soldiers on both sides of the siege of Perugia by Octavian's troops in the winter of 41/40 bce, which are inscribed with messages like these: “I'm aiming for Octavian's asshole”; “I'm aiming for Fulvia's clitoris”; “Greetings, Octavius: You suck dick!” The writing of sexually charged messages on weapons or near battle sites finds parallels in other times and places, but what gives these graffiti their particularity is not only the phallic shape of the object but the term denoting them: as in modern anatomical language, *glans*, “acorn,” also signifies the tip of the penis. Form, purpose, and message are tightly interwoven.⁴

A repertoire of insults informs the Greek and Latin graffiti. Prominent among these are a set of terms known to us from the ancient literary tradition, referring to men who are—more particularly, those who enjoy being—anally penetrated. Like all insults, these words are perhaps not meant or understood literally in every case; yet the breathtakingly concrete jokes at the expense of men who enjoy being anally penetrated, which are found throughout the Greek and Latin textual tradition, remind us that the denotative meaning of these insults was never far from the surface. In Greek, the most common of such insults are *katapugōn* (“one who takes it down the ass”) and *euruprōktos* (“having a broad anus”); a few others appear too: *lakkoprōktos* (“having an anus like a cistern or tank”), *pugaios* (“butt-man”), and even *prōktos* (“anus”) itself—and no doubt there were others. These epithets have been found attached to men's names

in graffiti around the Greek-speaking world, from Athens to southern Italy and Sicily in the West and Egypt in the East (Milne and Bothmer 1953, Fraenkel 1954, Lang 1976, Masson 1976, Lombardo 1985, Bain 1994 and 1997, Langdon 2004). Interestingly, *katapugōn*, and in one case the feminine *katapugaina*, have been found in a handful of graffiti attached to women's names as well (Milne and Bothmer 1953, 215; Fraenkel 1954; Lang 1976, C27; Lombardo 1985, 298). The implication is important. Whether or not the literal sense of the term *katapugōn* is active in any given instance, graffiti referring to anal intercourse were not limited to pederastic or homoerotic contexts alone.

Latin graffiti contain nothing quite like the exuberant Greek *euruprōktos* or *lakkoprōktos*. Instead we find *pathicus* (“passive”) and, much more often, the more polyvalent *cinaedus*. Borrowed from Greek and ultimately, it seems, from a language of Asia Minor, the noun denotes a type of dancer known for his suggestive movements of the hips and buttocks; used as an insult, it suggests effeminacy and a proclivity for being anally penetrated. The word appears in about thirty Pompeian graffiti, as well as in several from Herculaneum⁵ and from across the Latin-speaking world, from Spain in the West (*AE* 1994, 1061, in Murcia) to the heart of Rome itself (*CIL* 6.248, from the Forum Romanum).

While widespread, *cinaedus* was not the most common of insults in the language of Latin graffiti: to judge by Pompeii, at least, that honor goes to *fellator* and *cunnilingus*. The published graffiti from the city contain 126 allusions to oral sex, 83 references to vaginal or anal penetration, 30 occurrences of *cinaedus*, and only two of *pathicus*. The implications of these statistics go beyond Pompeii, and in fact beyond the language of graffiti. While jokes at the expense of men and women who perform oral sex are certainly part of the Greek invective and comic traditions, related insults seem to have been more prominent features of the Latin-speaking world, where they were arguably nastier insults even than *cinaedus* or *pathicus* (Williams 2010, 218–24). The very existence of the Latin noun *cunnilingus*, referring not to the action but to the man who performs it, is suggestive, as is the fact that it was a common insult. The noun has no equivalent in Greek; it may be significant that a graffito in the so-called Roman Market in Athens uses the Latin noun, transliterating it into Greek and giving it an appropriate Greek genitive ending (Hoff 2006: *Elaphēboliou topos konnolēngou*; for discussion of the phenomenon of “character switching,” see Adams 2003). On the other hand, a recent discovery from Bulgaria reminds us of how partial our knowledge of ancient sexual vocabulary is and must remain. A brick from Philippopolis was inscribed in the third century ce with a Greek graffito insulting a

certain Euphiletos as a “cunt-licker,” using a word that was previously unattested (Sharankov and Dimitrova 2003: *kusthekleikhōn*), perhaps an *ad hoc* joking coinage, perhaps inspired by Latin *cunnilingus*, but perhaps not.

In some graffiti it is hard to gauge how active the literal meaning of the insulting term is, as in the rude message “Get moving, cocksucker!” written on a column in the garden of a home in Pompeii (*CIL* 4.8400: *move te, fellator*), or in one of the captions underneath scenes of a quarrel among gamblers, painted on the wall of a tavern: “Ortus, you cocksucker, I won!” (*CIL* 4.3494 with Colin 1951: *Orte fellator, ego fui!*). In others, however, the literal meaning urges itself. Some messages from Pompeii identifying named men and women as *fellatores* or *fellatrices* are accompanied by drawings of faces, mouths, and penises to underscore the insult for those who could read the words and to communicate it directly to those who could not (*CIL* 4.10222, 1666, 1850, 10005). Others name partners: “Jucundus licks Rustica's cunt” (4.4264) and “Martialis, you suck Proculus” (4.8841) are but two examples. Others, superficially complimentary, can also be read as acts of exposure, such as the message “Theodosia gives good head” scratched on a pottery vessel found in the Athenian agora (Lang 1976, C33: *Theiodosia laikadei eu*), or similar remarks made regarding both men and women in Pompeii (e.g., *CIL* 4.2273 about Myrtis; 4.2421 about Rufa; 4.9027 about Secundus).

Graffiti can insult and expose, of course, even without using labels like *katapugōn* or *fellator*. A text scratched into a marble column in Emerita in Spain, probably in the first century ce, announces, in a combination of blunt obscenity and trochaic meter: “Surianus, who wrote this, fucked Maevius in the ass” (*CLE* 1899). In a small room off the atrium of a house in Pompeii is found this graffito: “Nicomopolis [fem.], I have fucked you; so have Proculus and Fructus, Holconius' slave” (*CIL* 4.8171), where the specification that one of Nicopolis' partners was a slave adds sharpness to the point. And a comparable checklist graffito from Pompeii names both male and female names: “Nymphe [fem.] has been fucked; Amomus [fem.] has been fucked; Perennis [masc.] has been fucked” (*CIL* 4.8897).

Some Pompeiian graffiti referring to oral sex make an important point, which emerges from the Latin literary tradition: a man who uses his mouth to pleasure women could easily be assumed to do so with men, and vice versa. A message written on the wall of a room off the peristyle garden in the Casa di Pansa reads as follows: “Satur, don't lick cunt outside the gate, but inside it. Harpocras asks you to lick his cock. But, cocksucker ...”⁶ Elsewhere in the city, on a wall of a room in a modestly proportioned home, is found a message carved deeply in the plaster in quite large letters, insistently insulting a

certain Onesimus (the name is characteristic of slaves, and thus also of freedmen). Repeating his name three times, the graffito casts him in the role of both *fellator* and *cunnilingus*, bringing the message home with two prominent drawings of penises, one of which is ejaculating.⁷ Still distinctly visible as one enters the room, this graffito raises a more general question about the obscene messages found in so many domestic spaces at Pompeii. Were such rudenesses tolerated as part of the obviously widespread culture of graffiti writing? Or, were it not for the catastrophe of August 79 ce, would this graffito sooner or later have been covered up, the wall replastered and repainted? Or, like other buildings in Pompeii, had this home been partially abandoned after the devastating earthquake of 62 ce, and was it still being restored when disaster struck again, this time definitively, 17 years later?

Finally, some Latin graffiti use sexually aggressive language to insult their own readers, unnamed and potentially unlimited in number. In view of the widespread practice of reading aloud, the effect achieved when a passerby stopped to read such graffiti—especially those in the first person, and especially if the passerby was not alone—will have been particularly amusing. One message reads, simply enough: “You are a great big dick!” (CIL 4.7089: *imanis mentula es*), and another, whose details have been variously interpreted, includes the words “You who read this are a prick” (CIL 4.8617: *verp(a) es qui istuc leges*). A poem found on at least three different walls in Pompeii proclaims: “He who writes this is in love; he who reads this is fucked up the ass; he who pays attention is horny; he who passes by takes it up the ass” (CIL 4.2360, 4.4008: *amat qui scribit, pedicatur qui legit, / qui opscultat prurit, pathicus est qui praeterit*; see also 4.8229, 8230). A fragmentarily surviving message suggests that at least one graffito writer had the clever idea of returning the insult: “—and he who wrote that sucks dick!” (4.1623: *et qui scripsit fellat*). All of this is reminiscent of a theme found in Latin poetry, whereby the relationship among poet, readers, and text is cast in sexual, sometimes specifically penetrative terms (Williams 2002; see also Svenbro 1993).

Sex for sale

Numerous graffiti in Pompeii attach a price to a person's name, and sometimes to a specific sexual service. In view of the ubiquity of prostitution in the ancient Mediterranean, the referent seems clear enough. Or is it? To be sure, any one of these graffiti might be an advertisement for a prostitute who was available nearby—most of them probably are—but any one of them might equally be teasing or

malicious acts of exposure with no basis in fact: “For a good time, call ...” Then there are a few graffiti that name no names: “I’m yours for 2 asses” or “Cock for 5 sesterces” (*CIL* 4.5372, 4.8483). What communicative functions might such announcements have had? And what are we to make of the fact that both of these, along with some other graffiti attaching prices to names (e.g. *CIL* 4.7339), were written on the interior walls of private homes? By whom, for whom, and why were such messages written? In any case, graffiti like these do not necessarily signal the availability of the announced services nearby. (For the problems associated with identifying specific buildings or rooms in Pompeii as brothels, see Wallace-Hadrill 1995, Clarke 1998, 196–206, McGinn 2004, Beard 2008, 233–40.)

The one building in Pompeii that unambiguously served as a brothel is the famous *lupanar* at VII.12.18, consisting of a central lobby surrounded by a set of individual bedrooms, each fitted out with a built-in bed; a latrine is discreetly located off the lobby. About a hundred graffiti have been found on the walls of this establishment, nearly all in Latin but a handful in Greek (*CIL* 4.2173–296; see Levin-Richardson 2011). In this case we can be confident that paid sexual encounters of the kind mentioned in the graffiti did indeed occur here—and often; but, even so, the historical veracity of any given graffito cannot be assumed. More fruitful is an inquiry into which *kinds* of sexual acts and constellations, and what range of prices, are mentioned, along with the glimpse at male rivalry, boasting, and homosociality they may give us. In short, what overall picture of an active brothel in first-century ce Pompeii do these graffiti give us?

The Latin literary tradition depicts a world in which brothels could be staffed by female workers, male workers, or both. The wall paintings that survive from the establishment in Pompeii all depict encounters between men and women, and, while most of the surviving graffiti on its walls do the same, a handful seem to suggest the presence of male prostitutes in this brothel, though here again certainty eludes us.⁸ In any case, most of the graffiti from the walls of this brothel that refer to sexual acts allude to vaginal intercourse (*futuere*) and fellatio (*fellare*). There are numerous messages in the voice of customers recording their visits, such as these: “Facilis had a fuck here”; “I have fucked many girls here” (*CIL* 4.2178, 2175). Some speak in the voice of satisfied customers, indulging in macho boasting or complimenting the workers on their technique: “Myrtis, you give good head” (*CIL* 4.2273). A few messages seem to be in the voice of women brothel workers, complimenting certain customers on *their* technique: “Vitalio, you fuck well!” (*CIL* 4.2187: *Vitalio bene futues*; similar messages include 4.2175, 2185–6). The eloquently simple announcement “I [fem.] was fucked here” (*CIL* 4.2217: *fututa sum hic*)

is still distinctly visible above the bed in the first chamber on the left. It is tempting to imagine a woman kneeling or standing on the bed to scratch this message in the wall in her time off between customers; yet we cannot entirely exclude the possibility that it was playfully written by a customer, as an act of ventriloquism.

A few graffiti found in the brothel refer to sexual practices other than vaginal intercourse and fellatio: “Fronto totally licks cunt” (4.2257: *Fro(n)to plane lingit cunnum*). And a perfume seller named Phoebus may have been a return client whose tastes were not limited to vaginal intercourse. To be sure, on a wall of the first cubicle on the left we find the announcement that he is skilled at this kind of sex (CIL 4.2184: *Phoebus unguentarius optime futuet*), and a man by the same name is commemorated as a “good fucker” in a graffito found in the next cubicle (CIL 4.2248: *Phoebus bonus futor* [sic]); but the same wall of the first cubicle on which was written the message about the perfume-seller Phoebus as a good “fucker” also contains the statement that Phoebus is an “ass-fucker” (CIL 4.2194: *Phoebus pedico*). That these three graffiti refer to one and the same man is likely, but not certain beyond a doubt; and of course we cannot know who wrote them. But the workings of the Latin sexual vocabulary make one thing clear: the word *pedico* does not denote a man who performs anal intercourse with exclusively male partners. The graffito “I want to fuck some ass” (CIL 4.2210: *pedicare volo*), also from the first cubicle on the left, whether eagerly anticipating a pleasure or complaining that it has been denied, is a declaration of desire not for male partners but for a type of pleasure that could be found with partners of both sexes. Immediately underneath these two words, someone wrote two more, which seem to come in response: “We’ve seen this!” (*vidimus hoc*, 4.2211). Are these the words of another customer, or of a worker confirming that this man got what we wanted?

The prices associated with sexual services in Pompeiian graffiti can be contextualized by Martial’s epigrams: these were, to be sure, written a few decades after the destruction of Pompeii and they are mostly set in the city of Rome, where the cost of living may have been higher, but they nonetheless offer a rough guide. In one of Martial’s poems we read that a warm dish of chickpeas—cheap street food—could be had for a single *as*, as could a sexual encounter (1.103.10: *asse cicer tepidum constat et asse Venus*), and that, as it happens, is the lowest price we find in the Pompeiian graffiti: a man or boy named Felix offers fellatio for a single *as*; a woman or girl named Lais, for two (CIL 4.5408, 4592). Above these rock-bottom rates we find a range of prices matching a variety of budgets: 4, 8, and 10 *asses* (CIL 4.7339, 5203, 2193, the last on a wall in the brothel). Moving into a higher price range, we find a message carved above a seat outside the

Porta Marina, a convenient resting spot for travelers coming into the city: “Whoever sits here should read the following in particular. Anyone who wants a fuck [*si qui futuere volet*] should ask for Attice: 16 asses” (*CIL* 4.1751). Higher still is the price in the graffito “Cock [*mentula*] for 5 sesterces” (*CIL* 4.8483): equal to a full 20 asses, this is double the rate charged by Drauca in the brothel and 20 times Felix’s price for fellatio. Whether referring to a real possibility or entirely fantasized, this announcement seems to place a premium on phallic services.

Nearly all surviving graffiti referring to prostitution speak of male customers and prostitutes who are either female or male; the implication (often, as we have seen, explicitly drawn out) is that the services offered are the receptive role in anal or vaginal intercourse, or else fellatio. But the graffito announcing the availability of phallic services for 5 sesterces reminds us of another possibility mentioned on a few occasions in the Latin literary tradition: male and female customers might pay to be penetrated (see the fragments of Pomponius’ comedy *Prostibulum* / *The Prostitute*; Petr. *Sat.* 7–8 and 126; and Juv. 9). Furthermore—and particularly intriguing, in view of the strong bias against those who perform oral sex found in the literary tradition and in view of the very use of *cunnilingus* as an insult—a few Pompeiian graffiti advertise the availability of men to perform cunnilinctus for payment, and at a low rate at that: Glyco does so for 2 asses and Maritimus for 4, and he specializes in young unmarried women (*CIL* 4.3999, 8939–40). These graffiti can be read in two ways, which are not mutually exclusive: as factual communications that reveal an option available to women with some money to spend, or as slurs against the men named.

Voices

Reading an ancient graffito, we are faced with three intertwined but distinct questions: Who carved the text on the wall or object? Who composed the text? What kind of voice speaks in the text? The first two of these questions are best approached agnostically. A graffito that identifies itself as having been carved on the wall by a woman may actually have been put there by a man, and vice versa, and repeat graffiti (especially poems) demonstrate that the person who carved the text was not necessarily its author. It is on the point of *voice* that we are on firmer ground. As we have seen, one kind of voice in particular is most often heard: that of the normatively masculine man, expressing his desires for (usually younger) women and men, aiming

jokes, ridicule, or insults at women or effeminate men, and himself playing the penetrating role when it comes to sex.

This voice dominates, but it is not the only one we hear. Besides the announcement “I [fem.] was fucked here” scratched on the wall above a bed in the Pompeiian brothel, consider three other graffiti from that city: “I sit on it when I like” (accompanied by an image of a phallus); “I lick Pyramos every day”; “I shat [on?] this” (underneath a relief sculpture of a phallus) (*CIL* 4.950: *ubi me iuvat, asido*; 10041d: *Piramo cottddie* [sic] *linguo*; 10.8145: *hanc ego cacavi*). The first speaks in the voice of someone, male or female, who enjoys being penetrated and the second in the voice of one who performs fellatio; the third either expresses scorn for the usually so potent image of the phallus, or else speaks in the voice of one who has been anally penetrated (for “shit[ting] dick” as a coarse way of describing the receptive role in anal intercourse, see Williams 2010, 29–31). Of course, any one of these graffiti might be an act of imaginative ventriloquism, whether playfully teasing or malicious, but such voices are rarely heard so directly in the Latin and Greek literary tradition.

I end with two poems carved on the walls of Pompeii, which raise the question of women's presence in the culture of graffiti with particular urgency. In the doorway of house IX.9.f is inscribed a poem in not quite correct dactylic meter, opening with a vivid evocation of an embrace: arms around neck, kisses and soft lips (*CIL* 4.5296 = *CLE* 950; see Copley 1939, Gigante 1979, 212–16, Courtney 1995, 306). Of course we cannot know who carved these words into the wall, or who composed them, but what is the poem's dramatic situation? In the next two lines the speaker addresses a woman with the affectionate diminutive *pupula* (“baby”) and decries men's untrustworthiness. In the following line, thanks to the feminine form *perdita* (“lost”), we learn that the speaker is herself a woman, one who has lain awake pondering the vicissitudes of Fortune and telling herself that, after Venus has joined two lovers' bodies ...—whereupon the meter quickly decays and the text becomes fragmentary. The themes are clear enough; but who is speaking to whom? On one reading, this is a poetic soliloquy in which a woman ponders her own painful experiences with men and addresses herself in Catullan manner; the opening wish for an embrace and kisses express a backward-looking yearning for her man. On another reading, however, this is a dialogue in which the speaker, a mature and experienced woman, is urging another, younger woman to be wary of men and to take comfort in *her* embrace and *her* kisses.⁹

On the rear wall of the peristyle garden in house IX.3.11 is scratched part of a poem addressed to a drunken mule-driver, beginning in rough iambics, switching to rough trochaics, and then

becoming indecipherable (*CIL* 4.5092 = *CLE* 44). Nothing in the language indicates unambiguously whether the speaker is male or female, but an unusual act of correction draws our attention to the person of the carver, and perhaps also the composer.

If you felt the fires of love, you would be in a greater hurry to see Venus. I am in love with a delightful boy youth. Goad the mules please! Let's go! You're drunk. Let's go! Take up the reins and give them a shake! Take me to Pompeii, where my sweet love is. You are [he is?] my—

The correction, whereby a line was drawn through the word *puerum* (“boy”) and *iuvenem* (“young man, youth”) was written above it, has sparked a question or two, as has the rough quality of the meter, which is extreme even for a graffito. Was the person who carved this text on the wall recalling an iambic poem poorly? (The appearance of the phrase “take me to Pompeii” in a poem written on a wall in Pompeii might mean that the graffito carver is quoting a poem composed elsewhere; but it need not.) Or was he or she freely composing, with only an approximate mastery of metrical technique? And what provoked the change of “boy” to “young man”? Was the correction made by the same person who carved the poem in the wall? If so, perhaps the carver of the graffito was simply correcting a misremembered near-synonym; but perhaps something more is at stake. As it happens, the two Latin words are metrically equivalent, so that the correction draws attention to the denotations and connotations of the words themselves. It has been argued, for example, that, since in the Latin literary tradition *puer* (“boy”) usually describes the object of a man's desire and *iuvenis* (“youth”) that of a woman's, the correction signals that the speaker of the poem is a woman, not a man (Courtney 1995, 300; Stevenson 2005, 50–1; making no mention of the correction, Gigante 1979, 219–21 asserts that the poem's theme is pederastic). Perhaps, as is generally thought to be the case with the poems attributed to Sulpicia, not only the speaker of the poem, but its author, too, was a woman; and perhaps the author and the graffitist were one and the same woman, composing as she carved.

Intriguing possibilities indeed. Yet the linguistic distinction that has sparked such speculation is not a hard and fast one: women in Latin literature desire not only “youths,” but also “boys” (*Cat.* 45, *Petr. Sat.* 24) and men desire “youths” as well as “boys” (*Cic. Rep.* 4.4, *Tusc.* 4.71). The fact remains that nothing in this graffito unambiguously marks the speaker as male or female. Like so many others, this piece of wall writing raises important questions about gender and sexuality but answers only some of them. More generally,

it illustrates the rewards and the challenges of reading Greek and Latin graffiti: anchored in a specific time and place, yet frequently fragmentary; often superficially straightforward, yet just as often, upon closer inspection, more than a little elusive.

Guide to Further Reading

For a helpful introduction to the study of inscriptions of all kinds, see Bodel 2001, especially pp. 1–56. For literacy and related issues, see Harris 1989 and Johnson and Parker 2009. For the concept of speech genre, see the seminal essay in Bakhtin 1986. See Adams 1982 for the Latin sexual vocabulary, both in the literary tradition and in graffiti, and Väänänen 1959 for the language of the Pompeiian graffiti in general. Several anthologies of Latin graffiti have been published, with brief commentary and translations into modern languages (English versions include Varone 2002, Wallace 2005, Hartnett 2008); the anthology of verse inscriptions with commentary in Courtney 1995 includes a small but representative selection of graffiti. See Langner 2001 for a richly documented study of graffiti drawings, some of them accompanied by text, from both Greek and Roman archaeological contexts.

Notes

1 Relevant discussions of modern graffiti include Stewart 1991 and Petrucci 1993. See Fleming 2001 for the apparently widespread practice of writing on interior walls in the homes and churches of early modern England.

2 I translate the verb *oiphein* cautiously. Characteristic of, but not limited to, Doric dialects of Greek, the word unambiguously denotes copulation, but its tone is hard to pin down. Its appearance in the famous fifth-century bce Gortyn Law Code from Crete demonstrates that it was not obscene at that specific time and place, at least. See Bain 1991 for discussion of this and other Greek verbs denoting copulation.

3 Nearby are some other insulting graffiti, including one with the word *cinedus* (CIL 4.10006), and one with the name *Fortunata* accompanied by a drawing of a woman performing fellatio (4.10005). This may or may not be the same woman who, in a graffito written on the wall of another Pompeiian house, is said to

offer fellatio for the price of 5 asses (4.5048).

4 *CIL* 11.6721 (*pet[o] Octavia[ni] culum; peto [la]ndicam Fulviae; [s]alv[e] Octavi fela*). Other messages include *L. A(nton) calve, Fulvia: culum pand(ite)* (“Bald Lucius Antonius and Fulvia, open up your ass!”) and *laxe Octavi, sede* (“Loose Octavius, sit on this!”). See Hallett 1977 for these sling bullets and Díaz 2005 for examples from Spain with other kinds of messages, above all the name or number of the legion or commander. Compare the Russian soldiers’ graffito written on a wall of the Reichstag during the siege of Berlin in April and May of 1945: “A cock down the Fascists’ throat, not Russia! Serves them right, sons of bitches!” (Baker 2001).

5 It has sometimes been argued that the culture of graffiti writing at Herculaneum was more staid than that of Pompeii (Solin 1973), but see the cautionary remarks at Langner 2001, 123–4. The insult *cinaedus* certainly appears on the walls of Herculaneum: *CIL* 4.10671 (on the wall of a water tank along the main east–west street), 4.10654b–d (interior wall of a private home).

6 *CIL* 4.2400: *Satur, noli cunnum lingere extra portam set intra portam; rogat te Arpocra(s) ut sibi lingas mentulam. at fellator quid* —. Some have taken the “gate” or “door” literally; others see here an anatomic metaphor and read the graffito as an ironic piece of advice on the technique of cunnilinctus, combined with a macho demand for oral service and the insult *fellator*. The insult itself may be addressed to Satur (“but, you cocksucker, what—?”), or else it may come in a third-person statement (“but what does a cocksucker —?”).

7 *CIL* 4.8380 (house at 1.10.8): *Onesime* (phallus) *xurikilla dos* (phallus) *labii, Onesimus. Onesimi* (sic) *qunuli(n)ce* (“Onesimus! A dick, a gift for your lip, Onesimus. Onesimus, lick cunt!”). This transcription is based on direct inspection; Della Corte’s version in *CIL* erroneously transcribes the third occurrence of the name as the expected vocative form *Onesime*. The noun *xurikilla*, noticeably larger than the rest of the text, is otherwise unattested, but it is probably a colloquialism for the penis (cf. *curculio/gurgulio* and see Adams 1982, 33–4).

8 See *CIL* 4.2249: *Hyginus cum Messio hic*, comparable to the male–female combinations in other graffiti (4.2224, *Felix cum Fortunata*; 4.2258, *Victor cum Attine hic fuit*). On the other hand, while the phrase “X with Y” can certainly mean that X and Y copulated with each other, a few graffiti raise the possibility that it might mean X and Y “were both here”—and each copulated with someone else (compare 4.2192, *Hermeros cum Philetero et Caphiso hic futuerunt*). A few graffiti seem at first glance to speak of unnamed male

prostitutes (*CIL* 4.2247: *futuīt quendam*, “fucked someone” (masc.); 4.2265: *futuīt quem voluit*, “fucked whomever [masc.] he wanted”), but in the language of Latin graffiti these masculine demonstratives need not be gender-specific (see Väänänen 1959).

9 I am aware of no unmistakable allusion to sexual acts between women in surviving Greek and Latin graffiti. Manganaro 1996, 136 sees a spectacular exception in a graffito carved on a lead block found in Sicily: reconstructing the text as *Pandosia pugizetai kai Hykō Rapan pugizei*, Manganaro interprets it as an announcement that one woman has anally penetrated another, presumably with a dildo. But the graffito is so fragmentary that great caution is called for.

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Chapter 31

Sexuality and Visual Representation

John R. Clarke

Modern Constructions of Ancient Sexual Representation

Until recently, both scholarly and popular writers employed the terms “erotica” and “pornography” to describe ancient visual representations having to do with sex. These terms prove to be anachronistic, since ancient viewers saw sexual representation in art through a very different lens from ours. What is more, they lacked the term “pornography”—at least in the meaning we have attached to it since its invention in the mid-nineteenth century (Kendrick 1987, 1–32). To assume that ancient Greeks and Romans were “just like us” with regard to sexual behavior—especially when we base that assumption on visual culture—is inaccurate historically and has caused both scholars and the general public to miss the rich nuances and surprising reversals inherent in ancient sexual culture. Visual representation takes us beyond the texts about sexuality (invariably presenting the viewpoint of the elite man) and into the attitudes of viewers of most classes and sexual identifications. The goal of this chapter is to provide sufficient contextual information to allow the reader to see ancient sexual representations as the ancient viewer did.

To work with so-called “obscene” objects, the scholar must attempt to put them back into their original viewing context. Questions that help establish the meanings of sexual representations include: Who paid for them? Who looked at them? What was their purpose? What models from the past did the artist use? Is the visual language literal

or symbolic? The so-called Secret Museums—collections normally closed to the public, which lump together, under the rubric of the obscene or the pornographic, widely varying representations that ancient viewers did not necessarily consider sexually stimulating—complicate our task. In these collections we expect to find images of human beings engaged in sexual intercourse, but we also find phallic objects meant to ward away evil spirits (*apotropaia*); representations of the sexual exploits of half-animal deities (e.g. satyrs, Pan); and deities with unusual sexual characteristics, like Priapus and Hermaphroditos. All of these visual representations bear on the question of ancient sexual acculturation, for they index attitudes and belief systems quite different from our own. We can also learn much about the rules of sexual engagement from visual humor with sexual subject matter, a genre that is particularly well attested in the Roman imperial period.

Archaic and Classical Greece

Although black and red figure vase painting is the major source for study of ancient Greek sexual representation, it gives anything but a straightforward record of sexual practices (Henderson 1988). For one thing, the images of heterosexual intercourse tend to focus on the orgies with paid female sex-workers (*hetairai*) that constituted one of the entertainments of the all-male *sumposion*. For another, the images of male-to-male sex emphasize the Athenian institution of boy love or pederasty (Dover 1978; Lear and Cantarella 2008). Both genres of visual representation must be understood in terms of both artist and audience. In the *sumposion* images, repeated scenes of men debasing women (forced fellatio, spanking, simultaneous vaginal and oral penetration) suggest that the elite male consumer viewed them as transgressive and perhaps humorous—a kind of sexual carnival that overturned the usual rules of sexual behavior encoded in Athenian law and literature (Clarke 2003, fig. 15). Representations of women fondling dildoes or being penetrated by macrophallic satyrs reflect the classical Greek notion (found in texts written by men) that women were sexually insatiable.

Scholars have also questioned the use of pederastic images as documents of sexual practices between the *erastēs* (adult male lover) and the *erōmenos* (adolescent male love object). Artists unfailingly represent man-boy couples facing each other and fondling each others' genitals. Intercourse, when represented, is intercrural (penises rubbing between thighs), rarely anal (Dover 1978; Davidson 1997). It seems likely that such representations reflect an artistic convention

rather than the actual sexual practices of Athenian elite male society in the late sixth and fifth centuries bce.

Sexualized demigods play an important role in visual representation in this period. In particular, the wild sexual exploits of satyrs—chasing maenads and having anal intercourse with each other—constitute a major theme in black and red figure vase painting. Scholars have variously cast these representations of sexual abandon among the retinue of Dionysos as an enactment of repressed sexual desire or as an index of Greek male attitudes toward women (Lissarrague 1990). The macrophallic, unrestrained satyr is, however, a monster in relation to Greek somatic and sexual ideals; clear evidence from both texts and visual representation reveals that the ideal penis was small, with a tight foreskin (McNiven 1995). Not only the huge penis is laughable: so is the satyr's improper animal sexuality.

Centaurs, hybrid animal–human creatures like the satyrs, become famously incontinent at the wedding of Pirithous and Hippodamia. Their attempted rape of the Lapith women is an important theme in Greek visual art (see, e.g., the east pediment of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia), and the battle of the Centaurs and Lapiths becomes a potent metaphor for the triumph of Greek civilization and for the theme of restraint over foreign barbarity.

The visual art of this period sees the creation of a yet another sexualized body, that of the pygmy. As Véronique Dasen has shown, Greek representations of the pygmy have nothing to do with the ethnic pygmy (Dasen 1993, 169–74). Instead, artists created a body with the characteristics of dwarfism to act the role of the Other: the opposite, like the satyr, of Greek somatic ideals—short, misshapen, and macrophallic. In a broad range of visual representations pygmies enact comic roles, victims of the animals they attempt to hunt and of their own rampant sexual drives. It is the type of the pygmy that finds unusually full development in the art of Rome.

The Hellenistic World

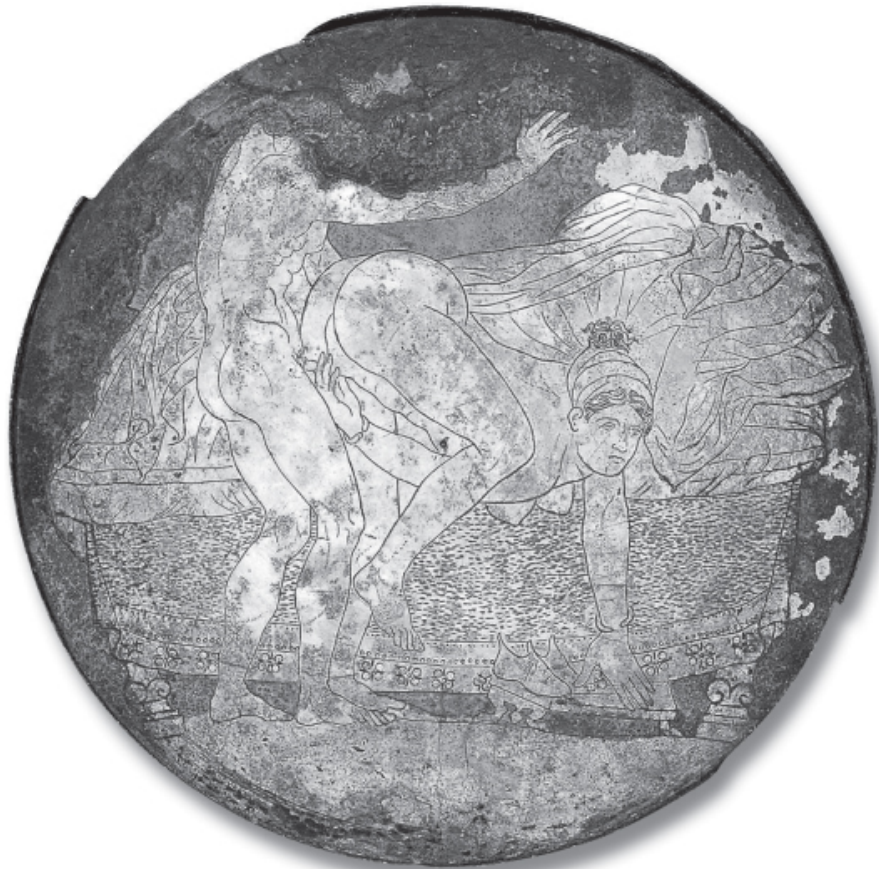
Visual representations of sexual activity among humans change significantly in the Hellenistic period (330–27 bce). The image of the male–female couple, alone in a richly appointed bedchamber, replaces the orgy at the *sumposion*. Artists take pains to make both the man and the woman beautiful—and equals in their pursuit of sexual pleasure. Some scholars interpret this shift to one-on-one sexual representations as a reflection of the emphasis on the individual—rather than the

collective—in Hellenistic society (Brendel 1970, 42–6). These romantic images may also reflect the growth of the romance novel in this period.

The inclusion of the god Eros in some representations, like the one on the exterior of a mirror case from Corinth now in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, reminds us that viewers in this period believed that sex with a beautiful partner was a gift of the gods. Yet the interior of this same mirror-case is entirely secular and emphasizes the woman's sexual prowess; she assumes the “lioness” position, raising her buttocks high while bending her torso low ([Figure 31.1](#)). Scholars have proposed that the owner of the mirror was either a famous courtesan or—equally plausibly—a married or unmarried Corinthian woman. If a married woman, her active participation and sexual prowess would reflect the Hellenistic notion that in marriage a woman should play an active role; Eros would then symbolize the rewards of the woman's efforts (Stewart 1996, 147–9).

Figure 31.1 Interior of mirror cover: male–female couple, c. 320 bce. Bronze, diameter 6 in. From Corinth, Greece.

Source: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Gift of Edward Perry Warren, RES 08.



But there are also serial images showing a variety of sexual positions on a single object (e.g., molded glass and terra-cotta vessels) that illustrate the couples' ability to perform advanced sexual positions. Several terra-cotta vessels of the second century bce from Delos and Pergamon, as well as a recently discovered molded glass vessel, present serial sexual imagery (Brendel 1970, 54–7; Clarke 1998, 30–5, fig. 6). Scholars have framed these representations in terms of the lost sex manuals that ancient authors allude to, most of them attributed to accomplished female prostitutes who are supposed to have lived in the Hellenistic period (Parker 1992).

Man-boy visual representations take a turn toward the romantic as well. Whereas the pederastic images of late archaic and classical Athens are often set in public places like the gymnasium, with both parties standing, Hellenistic man-boy couples lie on a bed. What is more, artists represent the act of anal penetration frankly, even while emphasizing the tender exchange of gazes (Clarke 1998, figs. 7–8). Although the venue has changed, the rules of engagement remain: the proper same-sex love object for an adult man is a boy rather than

another adult man.

For this reason the representation on a cut agate gemstone dating to the first century bce is atypical, for it shows two adult men copulating beneath a tender poem addressed to one of them (Figure 31.2). The artist posed the couple so that the viewer could see the erect penis of the man being penetrated anally, a unique representation in the visual record that—like the poem—suggests that this was a private commission representing an explicit and transgressive image of male-to-male sex (Clarke 1998, 38–42).

Figure 31.2 Male–male couple on bed with Greek inscription. First century bce. Agate gemstone, 1 ¼ × 1 × in.

Source: Koninklijk Penningkabinet, Geldmuseum, Utrecht.



It is important to note that in the Hellenistic period the development of such a wide variety of sexual representations occurs at both ends of the economic spectrum, from expensive cut gems and cameo glass to mold-made, mass-produced terra-cotta objects such as lamps and vessels. The plurality of styles and content in the lovemaking scenes that developed in the period between Alexander and Augustus provides rich sources for the artists of the early Roman imperial period.

The Augustan and Early Julio-Claudian Periods (27 bce–30 ce)

The quantity and variety of objects with sexual representations increase greatly in the age of Augustus—a profusion caused by the headlong growth of both Rome and the provincial capitals during the early empire. As in the Hellenistic period we see a diffusion of sexual imagery across social classes. In the period between 30 bce and 30 ce, terra-cotta workshops based in Arretium (modern Arezzo) produced vessels decorated with sexual imagery quite similar to that found on expensive silver and silver-gilt drinking ware meant for wealthy buyers. Elegant compositions feature handsome couples on beds, in a variety of sexual positions. What is more, these decorations often alternate scenes of male–female intercourse with lovemaking between a man and a boy, suggesting that Roman viewers of the lower classes accepted the predominant Hellenistic Greek view that equated these two kinds of love ([Figure 31.3](#)).

Figure 31.3 Fragmentary mold for a bowl: male–female couple; ithyphallic herm; man–boy couple, 1–30 CE. Terra cotta, 4 in. From Arezzo, Italy.

Source: Museum of Fine art, Boston. Gift of Edward Perry Warren, RES 08.33c.



These humble, mass-produced vessels reflect the bisexual decorations on luxury items, such as a recently discovered cut cameo glass perfume bottle, the Ortiz flask (Figure 31.4a and Figure 31.4b). On one side, a man kneels on a bed while grasping his female partner's waist in the preliminaries of intercourse, while on the other side it is perhaps the same man who is about to penetrate a boy. The boy's unusual hairstyle, combed in bangs over the forehead but with a long lock at the nape of the neck, appears as well on side B of the Warren Cup—a silver vessel dating, like the perfume bottle, to the Augustan period. Both images are variations of a much repeated composition of a man having anal intercourse with a young boy. But, unlike the Ortiz flask with its bisexual imagery, both sides of the Warren Cup present images of male-to-male lovemaking (Clarke 1993; Williams 2005). Scholars have proposed that the boys' hairstyle indicates their slave status, underscoring the rule that elite males could properly penetrate only persons of sub-elite status (Pollini 1999).

Figure 31.4 Perfume bottle, side B: male–male couple on bed. 25 bce–14 ce. Cameo glass, height 5 ½ in. From Estepa, Spain.



(a)



(b)

Even though its exclusively male–male lovemaking imagery sets it apart, the fact that the Warren Cup finds resonance, in style and sexual subject matter, with other works of Augustan and early Julio-Claudian silver reminds us that elite Romans—like the buyers of the mass-produced Arretine vessels—prized drinking cups with sex scenes on them. The scene on side A, like the image on the agate gemstone, is unique: it shows a young man lowering his buttocks onto another

man's penis with the aid of a strap, while a young voyeur looks on (Figure 31.5). The artist has emphasized the beauty of the protagonists, including their Augustan hairstyles and Polykleitan bodies.

Figure 31.5 The Warren Cup, side A, male–male lovemaking with boy onlooker, 1–30 ce. Silver, height 6 in.

Source: London, The British Museum, inv. 36683 G&R. Copyright The British Museum.



These neoclassical features, as well as the luxury of the setting—with lavish bedlinens, a lyre resting on a shelf, and a servant-voyeur—fit well with contemporary images showing male–female lovemaking. The finest examples in silver come from the hoard of household silver found in the House of the Menander at Pompeii. On two of the cups, male–female couples make love in elaborate garden bowers (Painter 2001, 56–8, pls. 5–6). Drinking vessels decorated with explicit scenes of lovemaking were part of the equipment of the drinking party, where men and women must have been expected to comment on the

imagery. The fact that both male–female and male–male lovemaking appears on these cups suggests the expectation—corroborated by the elite literature—that the Roman man regularly enjoyed penetrating both sexes.

The series of erotic pictures included in the painted decorative schemes of three rooms of the so-called Villa under the Farnesina, dated on the basis of style to circa 20 bce, casts further light on the place of sexual representations in elite Roman culture. In these rooms, conceived as picture-galleries, representations in fresco of erotic pictures hold pride of place, alongside reproductions of Greek masterpieces from the archaic and classical period (Clarke 1998, 93–107; Bragantini and de Vos 1982). And, as in the scenes of male–male intercourse on the Warren Cup, the male–female couples make love on luxurious beds in finely appointed chambers. These paintings of lovemaking in the Villa under the Farnesina, no less than the Warren Cup, were trophies of the owner's good taste and sophistication. Both the subjects and the profusion of such sexually explicit visual art contrast sharply with the sexual morality promulgated by Augustan textual propaganda (Zanker 1998, 101–66). There are hints in the literature that Augustus' program of moral reform was—at the worst—hypocritical (e.g. Ovid, *Tristia* 2.521–8). It should come as no surprise that Augustan and early Julio-Claudian representations, given their context within the sphere of private entertainment and collecting practices, seem to register positive social attitudes toward sex for recreation rather than procreation—and with beautiful partners of both sexes.

Late Julio-Claudian and Flavian Periods (30–96 ce)

The accidental preservation of Pompeii and Herculaneum as a result of the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 ce left a remarkable body of evidence for the cultural construction of sexuality. The many explicit erotic paintings decorating the walls of the houses covered by Vesuvius document a mentality similar to that of the patron who commissioned the decorative ensembles of the Villa under the Farnesina in Rome. We can document the steady production of images of male–female intercourse, at varying levels of quality, from the period of the late Third Style (30–45 ce) through the final days of Pompeii, Stabiae, and Herculaneum (24 August 79 ce). The finest of these images, like the paintings from the House of the Beautiful

Impluvium (Clarke 1998, 148–53), the House of the Centenary (Clarke 1998, 161–9), and the House of Caecilius Iucundus at Pompeii (Clarke 1998, 153–61), present handsome couples in richly appointed bedchambers.

In the case of the House of Caecilius Iucundus, the erotic painting includes a bedchamber servant, and the artist accented fabrics with applied gold leaf (this was lost when the painting was cut from the wall in 1875 and transferred to the Pornographic Collection in Naples: [Figure 31.6](#)). The painting's original position, at the heart of the entertainment area of a renovated garden, indicates the owner's wish to display it to all invited guests. Its theme of human love originally related to paintings depicting pairs of divine lovers in adjacent entertainment spaces. Like the erotic paintings in the Villa under the Farnesina in Rome, most Pompeian representations of explicit lovemaking come from domestic contexts; they are trophies of the owners' good taste. Rather than being hidden from view, they form part of proper domestic decoration. The fact that such paintings decorate rooms meant for intimate entertaining as well as semi-public spaces of the house suggests that, for ancient viewers, they represented elite cultural values.

Figure 31.6 Male–female couple on bed with attendant. From Pompeii, House of Caecilius Iucundus (V, 1, 26), peristyle I, north wall (62–79 ce).

Source: su concessione del Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali—Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei. Photo: Michael Larvey.



The three preserved paintings in room 43 of the House of the Centenary at Pompeii, one of the largest and most lavishly decorated homes in the city, provide a fuller interpretative context than those of the House of Lucundus (Figure 31.7). Only two of them represent lovemaking; the principal painting, opposite the entrance, shows the hero Hercules fallen into an inebriated sleep, while cupids play with his weapons. Although the paintings on the right and left walls show explicit sex between male–female couples, they do not signal the use of this room—as some scholars have asserted—for prostitution. This room, with its elegant anteroom, is adjacent to an elaborately decorated dining room; the three rooms together form a suite for entertaining, like those found in many wealthy houses and villas of the period. Ancient Romans would probably have called it a *cubiculum* (Clarke 1998, 157–8). Recent scholarship on texts has established that ancient Romans looked upon the *cubiculum* not as a bedroom in the

modern sense of the word but rather as a place for—among other things—meeting special guests, for private conversation, for sleeping, and for sex (Riggsby 1997). The combination of an image of sleep (the Hercules) with the two images of sexual intercourse in this room corroborates the textual evidence.

Figure 31.7 Male–female couple on bed. Pompeii, House of the Centenary, room 43, south wall, 62–79 ce. Fresco.

Source: su concessione del Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali—Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei. Photo: Michael Larvey.



If the relationship of the erotic paintings to the other rooms and paintings in a house can provide an interpretative context, in some cases the archaeological context and use of an object throw light on the owner's attitudes toward sex. The image of male–female intercourse on the exterior of a bronze mirror cover found in a burial context on the Esquiline Hill in Rome provides an excellent example of how the artist—and presumably the woman who owned the mirror—wished to frame sexual experience (Figure 31.8). The image on the

mirror, packed as it is with elaborate, intricately detailed furnishings (including a shuttered erotic picture and the woman's pet dog), and showcasing the beauty and passion of both the man and the woman, prompts speculation about the original owner. If the dog is the woman's pet, perhaps she instructed the artist to immortalize him even while showing herself in a moment of supreme pleasure, decked out in her favorite lovemaking jewelry. The other side of the mirror, consisting of the reflecting disk with a filigree border decorated with the signs of the zodiac, invites speculation as well. Is it a reminder that time—like the beauty that the mirror reflects—passes quickly? Excavators believe that the mirror was buried along with the owner's ashes, a fitting memorial to the woman's beauty and a thank offering for the sexual gifts that Venus had bestowed during her life.

Figure 31.8 Exterior of hand mirror, male–female couple in bedchamber, c. 70–90 ce. Bronze, diameter 6 ½ in. From the Esquiline Hill, Rome.

Source: Rome, Antiquarium Comunale, inv. 13694.



Returning to Pompeii, we find another class of paintings that belongs to the realm of entertainment. At the low end of artistic production are the paintings decorating Pompeii's Grand Lupanar, or

brothel (Clarke 1998, 196–206). The discovery of the Lupanar in 1862 caused a sensation, because everything about the building addresses the business of sex. It is a tiny, two-story structure occupying a triangular plot at the intersection of two narrow streets. The ground-floor interior consists of a broad corridor with five cubicles opening off it, each with a raised masonry platform that served as a bed, with a pillow also in masonry. Above the doorways excavators found paintings of beautiful male–female couples having sex on lavishly outfitted wooden beds.

One of the paintings, rather than depicting a sexual act, shows a couple contemplating an erotic picture with shutters, as if for inspiration (Figure 31.9). The woman, fully clothed in a long green dress, stands beside the bed, while the man, naked and resting against the headboard, gestures toward the picture. Rather than depicting the realities of the rough-and-ready sex that took place in the five shabby cubicles with their masonry couches, the paintings of the Lupanar must be seen as an attempt to pretty up the establishment with images of upper class sex. Although the Lupanar presents clear evidence, in its architecture, graffiti, and painted decoration, of what a brothel for poor, lower class clients was like, it would be a mistake to see the paintings (as many have) as mere illustrations of the services clients would receive. For one thing, the artist put his lovers on pretty beds with covers, in rooms furnished with erotic pictures and lampstands. For another, he created scenarios that emphasized the preliminaries of lovemaking and explored the different emotional states of the man and the woman. These are artistic conventions that point to situations far removed from the realities of the Lupanar, where a turn with a prostitute cost the equivalent of a cup of common wine (2 *asses*).

Figure 31.9 Pompeii, Lupanar, west wall, male–female couple contemplating erotic pinax, 62–79 ce.

Source: su concessione del Ministero per I Beni e le Attività Culturali—Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei. Photo: Michael Larvey.



Visual Humor as Index of Sexual Acculturation

Over against these essentially positive, romantic sexual representations are images of humorous sexual acts. One common comic device is to represent taboo sex acts, as in the eight little paintings found in 1986 in the dressing room of the Suburban Baths at Pompeii (Clarke 1998, 212–40). These small images, each positioned above a representation of a numbered box in perspective, were humorous labels associated with the real boxes beneath, where bathers placed their things (Figure 31.10). Their humor—and their value for our understanding of Roman sexual acculturation—lies in their candid representation of sexual acts that most ancient viewers would have considered to be debased: fellatio, cunnilingus, woman-to-woman intercourse, sexual threesomes and foursomes. These are the very acts that both invective and legal literature frame in terms of obscenity and moral debasement.

Figure 31.10 Pompeii, Suburban Baths, room 7, dressing room, east and south walls, 62–79 ce.

Source: su concessione del Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali—Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei. Photo: Michael Larvey.



Three representations play with the distinction between the pure and the impure mouth (the *os impurum*). Because the mouth was the organ of public speech, a person (particularly an elite male) reputed to have used his mouth for oral sex polluted the public trust (Clarke 1998, 220–3). In the Suburban Baths a woman incurs the *os impurum* by fellating a man; a woman, by performing cunnilingus on another woman (a unique representation in Greek and Roman visual art). And, although there are some representations of a man performing cunnilingus on a woman in return for fellatio (“69”), one of the vignettes in the Suburban Baths is unique because the man eagerly performs cunnilingus on a woman without receiving fellatio in return.

The vignettes in the Suburban Baths include several unique representations of women—all with beautiful bodies and fashionable hairstyles (the piled-up curls of the Flavian period)—performing debased sexual acts. A damaged but still legible image depicting a standing woman adopting a well-known heterosexual position to penetrate a woman lying on a bed indexes the construction of the lesbian penetrator that we find in misogynist invective (Juvenal 6.306–13; Martial 1.90, 7.67; [Figure 31.11](#)). Roman men believed that, in woman-to-woman sex, one of the women had to “play the man” and penetrate the other with a strapped-on dildo (Seneca, *Controversiae* 1.2.23). This clearly parodic image, like that of a woman performing cunnilingus on another, in the same series, contrasts sharply with highly positive images from the same period, of women making love.

Figure 31.11 Pompeii, Suburban Baths, dressing room 7, Scene V, two



The humor of the Suburban Baths also targets men who misbehave. For a Roman man, to like to be penetrated branded him with infamy (*infamia*); in two paintings from the Suburban Baths we see this sexual monster, usually called *cinaedus*, being penetrated by a man (Richlin 1993; Parker 1998).

The notion that the man must be penetrator but never penetrated is perhaps the most deeply ingrained Roman sexual construction. The elite male could properly suffer no form of sexual penetration. Yet he could penetrate with impunity the mouth, anus, or vagina of persons of inferior, non-citizen status, principally slaves and foreigners. Married women, virgins, and free-born boys were off limits (an early source is Plautus, *Curculio* 35–8). The social expectation was that all males were bisexual to some degree, and that they would engage in considerable sexual experimenting before (and sometimes after) marriage (Williams 2010). The sexual use of one's personal slaves and of prostitutes was expected and encouraged as a social safety valve.

In one vignette in the Suburban Baths the *cinaedus* is the man in the middle of a sexual threesome, himself penetrating a woman. His debasement would be shocking and funny to a Roman viewer because, although he properly penetrates a woman, he is simultaneously being penetrated by a man (Figure 31.12). This vignette may also encode

the cultural expectation that the *cinaedus* is attractive to women; texts often accuse him of adultery with another man's wife (Clarke 1998, 234). In a painting of a foursome (unfortunately poorly preserved, as a result of later over-painting), the penetrated *cinaedus* is being fellated by a woman. She, in turn, receives cunnilingus from another woman. In the Roman scale of sexual debasement, the worst kind of penetration is the forced fellatio of a man by a man (indicated by the verb *irrumare*) (Richlin 1981; Krenkel 1980) and the most unusual kind of penetration is cunnilingus, for the Romans believed that the woman receiving cunnilingus was penetrating the mouth of the person performing it (Parker 1998). These complex codes make the sexual foursome from the Suburban Baths a veritable compendium of Roman sexual taboos—and therefore, we presume, highly comic.

Figure 31.12 Pompei, Suburban Baths, room 7, Scene VI, threesome of two men and a woman, 62–79 ce.

Source: su concessione del Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali—Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei. Photo: Michael Larvey.



More obviously comic are representations of sexual acrobatics, considered more fully below in relation to second- and third-century ceramics from the Rhône Valley. Yet several paintings representing improbable sexual couplings once decorated the walls of the Tavern

on the Street of Mercury at Pompeii. Although they are now destroyed, contemporary engravings preserve their compositions—reflections, perhaps, of the popular nude mime (*nudatio mimarum*), a regular and highly licentious feature of theatrical productions (Valerius Maximus 2.10.8, Martial 1.1). The most famous of these paintings depicts a woman bending over to pour wine from a jug into a glass even while she is being penetrated from behind (Clarke 2003, fig. 43).

The Apotropaic Phallus

There is ample evidence that the Romans believed that the phallus—either alone or attached to a dwarf, hunchback, or pygmy—protected humans from the evil eye and demonic forces. There is already abundant testimony in archaic and classical Greek culture for the protective power of the phallus. On the island of Delos a row of monumental stone phalli line a sacred street. The ubiquitous stelae of Hermes, vertical stone pillars topped with a head of the god and figuring his erect phallus, date back to the archaic period (Siebert 1990, cat. nos. 9–187); the form continues to be elaborated throughout the Roman period, when artists substitute portraits of the paterfamilias for that of Hermes/Mercury. The herm is a redundant image, for the vertical pillar itself could be seen as an erect phallus, yet the carved phallus is always present, sometimes in the form of a bronze attachment. As guardian of crossroads, Hermes becomes the protector of travelers and, by extension, of commerce. Many shops at Pompeii feature images of Mercury, some of them sporting huge phalli (Clarke 2003, fig. 71).

The belief in the power of male fertility to avert evil goes far back in the ancient Mediterranean. Where contemporary European and American cultures associate any open display of male genitals with obscenity and pornography, ancient Romans felt it was their duty to put up phallic displays where danger lurked. They were unusually inventive in creating artworks that presented the male genitals as good luck charms. These displays, strategically placed in streets, businesses, houses, baths, and tombs, articulate an aspect of sexuality that has been lost to contemporary Euro-American culture.

Ancient Romans believed that the male organ, called *fascinum* from the word *fas* (“favorable”), was a talisman of fertility and prosperity that could also ward off evil spirits. Noise was also a power charm (babies and domestic animals often had bells, called *tintinnabula*, strung around their necks). One of the earliest finds from

Herculaneum (1740) was a particularly inventive hybrid phallus with the hind parts of a lion, wings, and four bronze bells (Clarke 2003, fig. 63). It would have hung in the house, wherever the owner wanted special protection from malevolent forces. Romans also wore on their persons small amulets made of coral and amber. Many are phalli, but some represent the hand with thumb between index and middle finger, the image of penis in a vagina.

In the Roman city, images of the phallus appeared where the danger was. At crossroads (which were protected by herms in classical Athens) they placed altars to the guardians of the crossroads, the *lares compitales*; another popular way of safeguarding the streets was to place a phallus there. At Pompeii, excavators found many large stone phalli set into the walls of streets and alleyways. One of these, found in 1880, is carved from tufa and measures 25 inches and a half; much of its red paint still adheres (Clarke 2003, 98, fig. 65). Set into the wall beneath it was a carved marble plaque with the words *hanc ego cacavi* ("I shat this one out"), which added a bit of obscene humor to the *apotropaion*.

A terra-cotta plaque figuring an erect phallus, found above the oven in a bakery at Pompeii, bears the legend *hic habitat felicitas* ("Here dwells happiness"; Clarke 2003, 99, figs. 68–9). The context makes it clear that the baker was not thinking of the happiness of mere sexual arousal, but rather of the good luck that phallic fertility and power brought. He placed the phallic plaque over his oven, to make his bread rise and his business prosper.

The Embodied Phallus: Unbecomingness and Salubrious Laughter

Several classes of sexualized beings develop in the Roman period, often with clear apotropaic functions. One of these, Priapus, is an agricultural deity of Near Eastern origins. In the Roman period, writers and visual artists make him the offspring of Aphrodite and Dionysos (Pausanias 9.31.2). In art, Priapus has much in common with the Hermes on stelae, who seems to give the newer god Priapus some of his functions, making him protector of gardens and, by extension, of the doorway to the house (Clarke 1998, 174–7). Priapus also stands for abundance, usually bearing the fruits of the land in his mantle, lifted to reveal his enormous phallus.

For the Romans, as is evident from Priapic poetry, Priapus becomes a sort of talking phallus, embodying both male fantasies of the omnipotent phallus and men's fears of impotency (Richlin 1992a, 116). He is a phallic scarecrow: a human frame designed to support a gigantic penis. And he acts like a scarecrow, since his original and ongoing job is to protect gardens from thieves. The god's threat to those who steal the fruits of the garden is forcible penetration of the vagina, anus, or mouth (Richlin 1992a, 122). But when statues of Priapus appear in country shrines, devotees of both sexes come to pray to him for fertility. Worshipers of Priapus feature frequently in sacral-idyllic landscapes, a genre that appears in the late first century bce and continues well into the third. In addition to these serious roles, Priapus is a god who provokes laughter.

Amy Richlin has pointed out that, since Priapus is a fertility god with obscene features, the humor surrounding him is properly obscene (Richlin 1992a). It is a kind of sacred obscenity. It is also clear that Romans connected Priapus' huge member with the phallic *fascinum*, meant to incite the laughter that will dispel demonic forces and the evil eye. Ancient Romans believed (as do many inhabitants of the Mediterranean today), that someone who envied an individual's physical beauty or material prosperity could fix the evil eye upon that person and cause it to emit particles that could harm, or even kill him or her (Dundes 1981; Gravel 1995). Laughter, however, dispels the evil eye. The most effective visual means for inciting laughter is to represent *atopia*, "unbecomingness": huge phalli attached to individuals who look and act wrong (Levi 1941, 225). It is not surprising, then, that in the Hellenistic and Roman periods artists create a host of hyper-phallic beings who have body types outside accepted norms and who often perform obscene acts—all of them meant to incite salubrious laughter.

Crucial to the humor of Priapus and to hyper-phallic representations in general is the belief (mentioned above in relation to representations of satyrs) that large penises were both ugly and comical; this belief stems from the classical Greek definition of the ideal male body type and its opposite. In *The Clouds*, Aristophanes has the character Better Argument try to persuade young men to abandon the school run by the Sophist philosophers:

If you do these things I tell you, and bend your efforts to them, you will always have a shining breast, a bright skin, big shoulders, a minute tongue, a big rump and a small prick. But if you follow the practices of youth today, for a start you'll have a pale skin, small shoulders, a skinny chest, a big tongue, a small rump, a big dick and a long-winded decree. (Ar. *Nu.* 1009–20)

Visual representation overwhelmingly supports Aristophanes' judgment: in Greek and Roman visual art the right-sized penis is small. The Romans conceived of the over-large penis as a non-beautiful physical peculiarity, like the black skin of the Aethiops, the red hair of the German, or the deformities of the dwarf and hunchback. All of these peculiarities were fair game for derision, and artists used all of them to create the laughter that warded off evil.

A famous mosaic showing the evil eye being attacked by an array of weapons, among them the phallus of a hunchback, makes explicit the apotropaic role of misshapen, hyper-phallic beings (Clarke 2003, 108–11, fig. 76). The fact that the mosaic decorated the entry to a house, an important liminal space, reminds us that the owner wished to dispel the effects of envy as a person entered the house (Levi 1941).

Like the images of the hyper-sexual Priapus, hunchback, and bisexual Hermaphroditos, the sexually exuberant pygmy served as an *apotropaion* (Clarke 2007, 74–81). Beginning with the late first century bce we find a rapid development of the pygmy in Roman visual art—often accompanied by the Aethiops, a normally proportioned person whose skin is black. The males of both types sport enormous penises and perform outrageous sexual acts. Unlike sexual representations of beautiful human couples making love in finely appointed bedchambers, pygmies have sex out in the open, either in a picnic setting along the banks of the Nile or on boats (where we find both male–male and male–female sex). Throughout the first century ce frescoes of pygmies alone come to predominate, especially in garden settings of houses at Pompeii (Meyboom and Versluys 2007). Representations of the hyper-sexual pygmy-clown have a long life throughout the Roman world, often in contexts that demonstrate their apotropaic role (Clarke 2007, 87–107).

Sexual Humor in the Rhône Valley Ceramics (70–250 ce)

As the Italian ceramic production around Arezzo ceased in the 30s ce, workshops sprang up near Roman army installations on the Rhône. By the 70s their products, including lamps, bowls, plates, and wine jugs, were exported throughout the empire. Despite their importance for documenting the wide distribution and development of sexual art after Pompeii (they continued to be active through ce 250), the Rhône ceramics workshops have received little attention. On these lamps and pots we find many original sex scenes that go beyond what we know

from Pompeii and Rome. The ceramic artists, even while replicating time-honored sexual compositions, invented new positions and new combinations of lovers. Most interesting of all, they created a series of sexual scenes with captions. Some of these captions comment on the scene; others put words into the protagonists' mouths—often one-line sexual jokes.

Quantitative analysis suggests that ceramics with sexual subjects constituted a large share of both production and consumption of ceramic goods. In a catalogue of 1,121 Roman lamps, made in France for the most part but found in Switzerland, 159 have erotic scenes. The only categories with higher numbers are representations of animals (233) and gladiators and gladiatorial weapons (198) (Leibundgut 1977, 199). Another study, of Roman lamps in the British Museum, corroborates the great popularity of sex scenes, by one estimate the largest coherent group among the many subjects represented in the Museum's vast collection (Bailey 1980, 64).

The finest and most original sexual images appear in the so-called *médallions d'applique*: artists made the medallions in molds and attached them to bulbous, hand-thrown jugs. The medallions range in size from 5 to 18 cm in diameter. In the firing, the medallions bonded with the clay of the pot they decorated. The most recent count catalogues 440 different compositions among 700 medallions or fragments of medallions found. Categories include images of deities, emperors and empresses, gladiators, actors, charioteers, mythological episodes, and sex scenes.

The applied relief medallions all seem to be humorous in their intent. One of the problems in studying sexual humor is the lack of evidence in post-Pompeian wall painting. The miraculous preservation of so much material from the area covered by Vesuvius skews the statistics, making it seem that representing sexual humor (and perversity) was some sort of specialty in the Bay of Naples in the first century. These fancy pots—some decorated with as many as four different medallions—were popular gift items, given, for example, at the Saturnalia.

A medallion found at Lyons shows a man pleading his case to his partner, who turns her head away from him (Figure 31.13). He kneels at the foot of the bed, his face in profile. The woman leans back and parts her legs dramatically, although she turns her head away from the man. The first part of the caption is clear enough: *BENE FUTUO*, “I fuck well.” The second part, *VOLVI ME*, probably means “I’m laying down my life for you.” The man is pleading his case even while boasting of his sexual prowess.

Figure 31.13 Male–female couple on bed, with caption *BENE FUTUO*

VOLVI ME, second to early third century ce. Applied medallion, diameter 2 in.

Source: Lyons, Musée de la civilisation gallo-romaine, inv. 2000.0.2979. Photo: J.-M. Degueule.



“Giving it all up” for the woman is the subject of another sexual joke, where the artist suggests that the man is a victorious charioteer (Clarke 1998, 260, fig. 101). He holds the palm of victory in his left hand and is about to crown the woman with a laurel wreath. The artist has him saying: *tu sola nica* (“You’re the only victor”). In other words, the woman has conquered him in sex.

Things get dicier in a medallion, now lost, found in 1951 near Arles. There the woman actually turns the tables, taking up a soldier’s weapons ([Figure 31.14](#)). Using the familiar comic trope of role reversal, the artist has the woman—rather than the man—taking up sword and shield. She straddles him, as if about to assume the “woman-riding” position (*mulier equitans*), but she is actually leaning

back to brandish her (his) weapons. The man registers his alarm by raising his right arm to shield his face with his hand. The words *ORTE SCUTUS EST* literally mean “Look out! That’s a shield.” In a reversal of roles the woman has become the aggressor, the “soldier” in the battle of love. The man, although he should be armed with a sword (his erection), is in fact flaccid. He is powerless to defend himself against the woman’s real weapons. Given the fact that many such medallions served to decorate vessels found in tombs of the Roman military, the images take on a further level of irony. The soldier looks at the “defenceless” woman in a situation where she could easily defeat (castrate) him—using the man’s own weapons.

Figure 31.14 Male–female couple with caption *ORTE SCUTUS EST*, second century ce. Applied medallion, terra cotta, diameter 4 in., found at Arles (1951), lost.

Source: Arles, Lapidary Museum; drawing the author.



Another applied medallion combines a purely visual pun with intimate sexual commentary (Clarke 2003, 154–5, fig. 106). A couple makes love beneath a shuttered picture showing a four-horse chariot, an image that puns on the woman's position, the *mulier equitans* (woman riding). Here the implication is that she is not just riding but galloping. What is more, the artist has put words in the woman's mouth that comment shamelessly on her partner's sexual performance: *VA ... VIDES QVAM BENE CHALAS*. Aside from the missing first word, probably her partner's name, this clearly translates “Va ...! You see how well you open me up.”

Since the word *chalas* literally means “you open me up,” by using this verb the artist is reinforcing the composition's visual message, with the woman blithely bouncing on the man's penis while he stretches out passively beneath her. It is, once again, the brazen “liberated” woman dominating the man in sex. She is “on top” in every way—a role reversal intended to be humorous.

Sometimes the captions, rather than putting words in the protagonists' mouths, are punning comments on the action. A large and unusually well-preserved applied medallion recently unearthed near Lyons is still attached to the large jug it decorates (Figure 31.15). A man steers a boat with the rudder handle in his right hand—even as he grasps the woman's left flank with the other arm and pushes his penis into her ample, extended buttocks. She turns to him to touch his bearded chin—a well-known gesture of affection in ancient art. To the left we read the words *NAVIGIUM VENERIS*, literally “The Navigation of Venus.” Romans often used the name of the goddess Venus for the concept of sexual love, so an ancient viewer would understand the caption less literally, as “Sexual Steersmanship,” or even “On Course for Sex.” On any reading, it is an unforgettable image of what we call “multitasking.” It is a pun that connects steering a boat with steering the penis.

Figure 31.15 Male–female couple on boat, with caption *NAVIGIUM VENERIS*, second century ce. Applied medallion on vase, terra cotta, diam. 6 ½ in.

Source: Lyons, Musée de la civilisation gallo-romaine, inv. CEL 7645. Photo: J.-M. Degueule.



Many lamps from Arles demonstrate the creativity of local ceramicists—intent, it seems, on inventing new sexual jokes. Although preserved only in a terribly worn replica, a lamp with a man, a woman, and a winged cupid on the bed makes a joke of extreme sexual acrobatics—and it is the woman who is the star performer (Clarke 2003, 148–52, fig. 103). She is quite a bit smaller than the man, and perhaps this is why she does a shoulder stand, holding her lower body in a nearly vertical position so that the man, standing on the bed, can penetrate her. We see his right leg as he seems to stride into position, and, although his head is worn away, he seems to be gazing down at the woman. The most remarkable feature about this composition is the figure of the cupid, pushing the man's buttocks with both arms to increase his pleasure in penetrating the woman.

Balancing Acts: Evidence for

Sex-Shows?

A number of compositions that focus on a woman performing a balancing act while engaging in sexual intercourse appear in the applied medallions, suggesting that—like the painting from the Inn on the Street of Mercury at Pompeii—their reference is the *nudatio mimarum* or similar comic sex shows. A small medallion in the Archaeological Museum at Nîmes gets its visual interest—and humor—from depicting two men and a woman in a complex balancing act (Clarke 2003, 146, fig. 100). Although much worn, the composition is legible: the woman reclines on the back of a man at right, who holds a large object with a handle in his right hand, perhaps a lantern or a pail; a second man, at the left, parts the woman's legs. The artist complicated these acrobatics by making the woman hold a lamp in her outstretched hand—a delicate situation, since any slight motion might spill the oil and the flame. If the group achieves their feat, they could easily compete with the couple from the Inn at Pompeii, where it is wine rather than oil that the woman is trying not to spill.

A lamp from Arles shows a liberated woman combining her weight training with sexual pleasure, while the man is powerless to control her (Clarke 2003, 151, fig. 104). The woman's pose, half-crouching, half-standing, over the man's erect penis while she holds a weight in each hand, is dynamic and even a bit menacing. As in the *NAVIGIUM VENERIS* image, part of the humor here lies in the difficulty of having sex while performing a different, unrelated task. The viewer has to laugh while trying to imagine how the woman is able to maintain the alternating rhythm of swinging the weights to and fro while controlling the in-and-out of the man's penis.

A final type of sexual acrobatics that extends beyond the Rhône Valley ceramics features women copulating with stallions and mules—carefully choreographed acts with trained performers, both human and beast, and played for laughs (Johns 1982, 110–11). Textual sources—most notably Apuleius' *Golden Ass*—explore both the psychodynamics and the humor of woman–quadruped copulation. Their humor lies in breaking the taboo against bestiality even while alluding to Roman male beliefs about the insatiability of women.

The Third Century and Beyond

Evidence dwindles significantly in the third century, partly because of accidents of preservation. Nevertheless, the remains of a program of

erotic paintings (today mostly destroyed) in a room of the Insula of the Painted Vaults at Ostia (c. 250 ce) suggest that artists and patrons still valued such decorations (Clarke 1998, 265–74). Sexual scenes on lamps, both male–female and male–male, have an unusually long life; they continue to show up as late as the sixth century. Mostly found in tombs—and often in areas of the Roman world where burning olive oil was a luxury (Britannia, Germania, Upper Pannonia)—the lamps seem to have constituted a proud proclamation of Roman-ness for the individuals who placed them there. So too, it seems, the sexual imagery itself, yet another reminder of the essentially positive values that both Greeks and Romans attached to visual representations of lovemaking.

Whether their purpose was to portray the delights of sexual intimacy or the absurdities of the battle between the sexes over sex, visual representations of sexual activity were everywhere, for all to see. It is this social embrace of sexual representation that separates our own attitudes—formed as they are around nineteenth-century ideas of obscenity, pornography, and individual sexual identity—from those of ancient Greece and Rome.

Guide to Further Reading

Although somewhat dated, Brendel 1970 provides an excellent overview of the visual record from archaic Greece through the late Roman empire. More comprehensive in its scope, including the early modern discovery and reception of erotic art, is Johns 1982. For an up to date and comprehensive account of homoerotic scenes in Greek vase-painting, see Lear and Cantarella 2008; this publication supersedes the still useful Dover 1978. For Hellenistic and Roman visual representations, the most comprehensive study is Clarke 1998. Clarke 2003 presents excellent large-format color photographs and expands the study of second- and third-century ce ceramics from the Rhône Valley. For the study of sexual humor in Roman art, see Clarke 2007. Two volumes of essays provide interesting specialist studies on sexual visual representation: Richlin 1992b and Kampen 1996.

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Chapter 32

Sexuality in Jewish Writings from 200 bce to 200 ce

Mary R. D'Angelo

Introduction

When Philo recounted his journey to Rome to plead with Gaius (Caligula) over the wrongs of the Alexandrian Jewish community, he could claim that Augustus had recognized the rights of Jewish freedperson citizens at Rome and that the mother city Jerusalem had established colonies throughout the cities and islands of the Mediterranean as well as beyond the Euphrates (*Legation to Gaius*, 155–61, 281–5). Jewish cosmopolitanism, in Philo's view, multiplied the benefits that Jewish piety and devotion to the temple brought to the empire. His own sophisticated Greek and philosophical learning was perhaps the apex of that cosmopolitanism, but the Jews of the Mediterranean all belonged to the Greek-speaking world in which they lived. As Jews (*Ioudaioi*), they constituted not a religion, but a nation (*ethnos*) like other nations, having ancestral customs that included rites, shrines laws and allegiance to a mother city (Mason 2007: 483–6, 460–80). Understandings of this legacy were diverse and highly contested by writers who differed as widely as did the sectarians of Qumran, who chose physical withdrawal from other claimants, from Philo, perhaps the most eminent Alexandrian philosopher of his day.

This chapter will address discourse about sex in Jewish writings from 200 (the latest date for the *Book of the Watchers*) to 200 (the earliest date for the collection of the Mishnah). Except for a few brief references to the Dead Sea Scrolls (Hebrew and Aramaic) and the Mishnah (Hebrew), all will be texts written or circulated in Greek or Latin. Dates are often questionable. Since these works were preserved

for their interest to Christians, many now include Christian interpolations that raise questions about their Jewish character.

Scholarship has tended to focus on sexual ethics and to contrast Jewish practice to the sexual mores of Greece and Rome, encouraged by the Jewish (and Christian) texts that insist that their sexual probity makes them “not like the Gentiles.” But this assumption is gradually being superseded. Already around 300 bce, Hecataeus of Abdera found the marriage customs of the Jews similar to those of others (the Greeks?), although Moses had once given them special stipulations (Diodorus Siculus, *Library* 40.3.8). Thus, after 200 bce, “interactions” fits the relationship between Jewish sexual practices and those of Greeks and Romans better than does “influences.” Attempting to delineate the ways in which ancient Jewish sexual ideas and practices interacted with Greek and Roman constructions of sexuality is fraught with multiple difficulties. Access to the sexual experience of ancient Jews depends upon literary resources even more than is the case with Greeks and Romans. As always, the gap between what people do and what they talk about is more pronounced around sex.

Speaking (or Not) of Sex

Greek marriage, as Hecataeus knew it, was serially monogamous and endogamous, while avoiding incest. Plutarch's views on kinship and marriage are of interest: Romans originally rejected kin marriages but had come to allow cousin marriages, while Greeks had always valued kin marriages (Plutarch, *Roman Questions* 289d–e). Jewish writings between 200 and the mid-first century bce often polemicize against intermarriage and incest and affirm kin marriages (a value dramatized in Tobit), while writings from the Roman era likewise express concerns about incest and eschew marriage with non-Jews; but also begin to allow a value to exogamy (see below).

Was polygamy the Mosaic custom Hecataeus thought Jews had abandoned? The narratives and legal stipulations of the Hebrew Bible assumed polygamy to be normal. Rabbinic literature (from the Mishnah on) included both discussion of legal points of polygamy and a trend toward monogamy, and Roman emperors of the fifth and sixth centuries attempted to suppress Jewish polygamy (Satlow 2001: 189–92). But between 200 bce and 200 ce the topic is barely raised. The (Cairo) *Damascus Document* (CD) castigates those who “take two women in their lifetime” against the “principle of creation,” that is, “male and female [God] created them” (Gen 1: 27, CD 4.20–5.1; this complaint is often read as attesting a prohibition of divorce). The

Temple Scroll allows the king one wife only (11QTemple 57.15–19). Josephus, on the other hand, explains the multiple marriages of Herod as ancestral custom (*Jewish Wars* 1.477, *Antiquities of the Jews* 17.14), and the documents of an early second-century woman found in the Judean desert appear to reflect relations between two co-wives (P. Yadin 26; Kraemer 2004: 152). But no full, explicit argument for or against either polygamy or monogamy survives from the period.

Twentieth-century interpreters tended to assume that ancient Jews abhorred “homosexuality,” an assumption encouraged by Jewish texts that denounce the Romans or Greeks as practitioners of pederasty and male–male sex, much as Roman writers distanced themselves from “Greek love.” Scriptural grounds for this assumption were sought in the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah and in the prohibitions of “lying with a man as with a woman,” which identify this act as “an abomination”—in Hebrew *tw'bh*, in Greek *bdelugma* (Lev 18: 22; 20: 13). In both languages the word means “something loathsome” and has a broad range of referents; it is particularly frequent in references to non-Israelite worship. For the most part, neither this word nor the story of Sodom was taken to evoke homoeroticism before the first century ce. This deficit is often concealed by translations, which use the word “sodomy” to refer to male–male sex. But “sodomy” has no ancient equivalent. Genesis recounts the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (19: 1–29) after the men of Sodom attempt to violate the code of guest friendship by demanding to rape two strangers, actually angels sent to warn Lot to flee the destruction of Sodom (already decided in Gen 18: 17–33). The perpetrators present a radical contrast to the extravagantly gracious hospitality that Abraham had displayed toward the divine visitors (Gen 18: 1–8). The similar but grimmer story in Judges 19 is likewise concerned with obligations to a guest (Nissinen 1998, 45–52). Most biblical references to Sodom and Gomorrah use these names as a dreadful warning, an example of sudden and complete destruction. Only Ezekiel specifies Sodom's crime, defining it as haughty callousness: “this was the crime of your sister Sodom: arrogance [*huperēphania*]. With plenty of bread and an abundance of wine, she and her daughters lived softly. This she and her daughters had, but they did not aid the poor and the needy. They were haughty and committed crimes before me” (Ezek 16: 49–50 LXX).¹ Without naming Sodom, Wisdom of Solomon (late first century bce or early first century ce) compares its hatred of strangers (*misoxenian*) to Egypt's hostility to the Israelites (Wis 19: 13–15).

The only sympathetic treatment of male partners in the Hebrew Bible, the love of David and Jonathan (Ackerman 2005), leaves few traces in this period. But one text from Qumran seems conscious that Jews were not immune to the attractions of male–male sex. The *War*

Scroll (late first century bce to early first century ce) excludes women and boys from the eschatological camps, presumably because either youths or women might inspire lust and cause the warriors to ejaculate, thus becoming impure and unfit for battle (1QM vii, 3–4). This does not mean that the sectaries of Qumran approved of sex with boys any more than they approved of sex with female camp-followers. But it does show that at least some Jews conceived the objects of adult male sexuality in the same way as contemporary Greeks and Romans did, that is, as women and boys. Sexual contact between males seems to have been constructed as pederasty or as submission to penetration, and either was seen not as a differing orientation but as a lack of restraint continuous with, but more extreme than, the desire to seduce or rape girls (see also Dio Chrysostom, *Discourses* 7.150–2).

Few celebrations of eroticism like those of *Song of Songs* or of Greek and Latin love lyrics survive from this period, but a few traces suggest a larger lost tradition. The *Genesis Apocryphon*, a fragmentary and highly colored retelling of the patriarchal narratives found among the Dead Sea Scrolls (and so not revised during Christian preservation), includes explicitly erotic descriptions. In one fragment, Bitenosh defends the legitimacy of her pregnancy by reminding her husband Lamech of her pleasure during sex (including some heavy breathing; 1QapGen^{ar} ii, 1–17); the text seems to share with the Hippocratics and Soranus the view that conception required a woman's orgasm (Dean-Jones 1994, 157–200). In another fragment, Pharaoh's desire for Sarah is aroused when he hears three courtiers' detailed reckoning of her charms (1QapGen^{ar} xx, 1–9; cf. Gen 12: 10–20). *Song of Songs* itself is represented among the Qumran texts by four fragmentary manuscripts; differences among them attest to the unsettled state of the text in the first century ce.

Even in novels whose narrative hinges on the beauty and attractiveness of the female protagonists (Greek *Esther*, *Judith*, *Susanna*), erotic descriptions are minimal. One modest exception is *Aseneth*, a novel about the Egyptian wife of Joseph (Gen 41: 37, 50; 46: 20), whose date (first century bce–third century ce) and provenance (Jewish? Christian? other?) are much debated. The narrative details her lovestruck sensations at the sight of Joseph: “her soul was pierced excruciatingly and her insides dissolved and her whole body trembled and she was overwhelmed with fright” (6.1; trans. Kraemer 2004, 313). Her lovesickness is recounted in similarly conventional terms (9.1–2, 10.2–8). The longer version is still more explicit, at one point describing Aseneth's breasts as “already standing upright like handsome apples” (8.5; trans. C. Burchard in Charlesworth 1983–5, vol. 2, 211).

Sex with the (Im)proper Stranger

At the early end of the period, ideas about sexuality tend to focus on the proper partner in the proper state. Biblical laws and narratives are read in order to establish how near or far a partner may be and what forms of purity safeguard sex.

At the extreme distance are divine partners. Like Greeks and Romans, Jews knew of high-risk couplings between heavenly and human beings. By 200 bce, the *Book of the Watchers* (= *1 Enoch* 1–36; Aramaic and Ethiopic, but once widely distributed in Greek) had elaborated an ancient fragment of myth that recounts the rape of human women by “the sons of God” (Gen 6: 1–4), identifying these “sons of God” as angelic beings called “the Watchers.” Not only had they violated their heavenly nature by human sex, they also revealed magical remedies, metalworking, jewelry and make-up, and other crafts. The mysterious Nephilim of Gen 6: 3 were identified as the children of the Watchers; and the women, and as giants (Num 13: 33) who turned to slaughter and violence. The legend is incorporated into *Jubilees* (before 100 bce), which uses it as an argument against intermarriage (*Jub.* 20: 3–5; cf. 4.22, 5: 1–11, 7: 2–23). Like the *Book of the Watchers*, *Jubilees* was popular at Qumran; the library also included a related *Book of the Giants* 4Q203. Among later writers, Philo (*Giants*) and Josephus (*Antiquities of the Jews* 1.73–4) offer their own readings of the myth.

Various explanations have been offered for the legend's origin and popularity: polemics against intermarriage (especially by priests), polemics against divination, parody of imperial domination (on *1 Enoch*, see Loader 2007, 43–9). But the ambiguities of Gen 6: 1–4 certainly invited explication, and fear of sexual contact with spirits appears in other texts of the era (*The Birth of Noah* = *1 Enoch* 106–7; Tobit 6: 14–8: 4). That the Sodomites seek to rape heavenly beings evokes the same problem of sex between alien ranks of beings as does the story of the Watchers; the two incidents are linked in *Jubilees* 20.5 and in the early Christian text Jude 6–7, which condemns the men of Sodom for their pursuit of “other flesh” (*hetera sarka*). Lamech's suspicion that Bitenosh's pregnancy was from one of the Watchers (1QapGen ar ii 1) strongly suggests anxiety about the ability of human males to maintain access to and control of female sexuality and fertility.

The closeness or distance of human partners was a concern. Already the Pentateuch had warned that marriages with the Canaanite

tribes would lead Israel to idolatry (Exod 34: 15–16, Deut 7: 2b–4), and had required that priests keep their “seed” untainted by intermarriage (Lev 21: 14–15). Ezra extended the priestly prohibition to all Israel. In *Jubilees*' version of the Genesis narratives, marriage outside Israel is presented as threatening not only in the myth of the Watchers, but in Rebecca's complaints about Esau's Hittite wives (*Jub.* 25: 1–23, 27: 7–11), and especially in the rape of Dinah (*Jub.* 30: 1–17), which seems to exclude even marriage with proselytes (Hayes 2002, 68–81).² The threat of incest inspired *Jubilees* to elaborate the single verse mentioning Reuben's appropriation of Bilhah (Gen 35: 22) into a complex narrative (*Jub.* 33: 1–20). Incest likewise motivated Judah's repentance over sex with Tamar (*Jub.* 41.1–28, revising Gen 38: 1–30). The sins of Lot and his daughters incur equal condemnation with the (unspecified) fornication of Sodom and Gomorrah (*Jub.* 16: 8–9). No defense of the patriarchs' multiple wives seems to be needed. In *Jubilees*' creation account, the deity observes the stipulations for purification after childbirth (*Jub.* 3: 8–12), a concern that fits well with the fear of contamination from alien partners. Both emerge from the sectarian push for purity (Satlow 2001, 141–2).

Social mores are the focus of the *Wisdom of ben Sira*. Written in the early second century bce, it survives in Hebrew fragments from Qumran and in a complete Greek translation (*Sirach*) from the last third of that century. As “wisdom to those who wish to live according to the law,” its advice on sex differs little from that of Proverbs. Addressing the free male head (or future head) of a household, the sage warns against sex with wicked women and prostitutes, temptations to incest and the company of other men's wives (9: 1–9). He condemns the sexually profligate man and wife (23: 16–27), contrasting bad women and good wives (25: 15–26: 17). A daughter's sexuality is a particular anxiety, as a threat to her father's honor (7: 23–6, 22: 4–5, 26: 10–12, 42: 9–14). Co-wives, and so the survival of polygamy into the second century bce, may be attested by a reference to a wife's jealousy of her rival (26: 6).

Sexual Apologetics and the Advance of Rome

At least from the mid-second century bce, an increasing amount of Jewish literature was written in Greek, much of it engaging at high levels with philosophical, historiographical, and epic traditions. Apologetic and polemical motifs were central to these works, which

sought to supply their readers with a defense against misconstructions of the Jewish community. As Rome extended its reach to the East, sexual morality became increasingly important to apologetic goals (Edwards 1993, *passim*). During the late republic and the civil wars, Roman political discourse engaged in charges and countercharges of adultery and *impudicitia*. In the early principate Roman rule was justified by claims of superior virtue, including the virtues of piety and temperance or restraint (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities* 1.5.2–3). Augustus' marriage laws (18 bce) heightened and perpetuated this “politics of immorality.” The law against adultery, *stuprum* with an unmarried woman or a boy, and collaboration in sexual crimes (*lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis* or *lex Iulia de adulteria et pudicitia*) presented him as the guardian of sexual morality. With the law promoting marriage and child rearing (*lex Iulia de ordinibus maritandis*), it instituted what might be termed a family values program. As *pater patriae*, and indeed father to the world, Augustus stepped in where he judged fathers and husbands to have been lax (Horace, *Odes* 1.2, 3.24.25–30; Ovid, *Fasti* 2.127–33; Severy 2003, 49–56; Treggiari 1991, 293).

For Jewish writers, Roman claims offered the opportunity to understand and present themselves as purveyors of the greater *paideia* of the law of Moses and its indwelling wisdom, and so as moral teachers of their conquerors. Thus, for the most part, they represent their sexual practice as the higher ideals to which other nations aspire but which they constantly violate. Their moral superiority is grounded in the sure guidance of the God-given law.

The first explicit condemnations of homoeroticism emerge in texts with apologetic and polemical aims. The *Letter to Aristeeas* (after 150 bce), promoting the divine origin and moral superiority of the law of Moses in terms that would appeal to the Greek-speaking world, contrasts the Jews with other nations, who sexually approach (or, by emendation, prostitute) males and who violate both mothers and their daughters (152). The *Third Sibylline Oracle*, dated in part to the same period, “predicts” Roman war crimes, highlighting Romans' indulgence in male–male sex and the prostitution of boys in brothels (175–8, 182–7). By contrast, those of the “pious race” are concerned with holy unions, and abstain from sex with boys (594–600). The prophet urges the Greeks to follow this Jewish example, abstaining from adultery and pederasty and rearing all their children (762–6). The Sybil thus stigmatized the Romans as practitioners and purveyors of sex with boys around the time when Romans expressed their own anxieties about sex with boys in the *lex Sca(n)tinia*, which appears to have criminalized sex with a free-born boy and submission to penetration on the part of a free man.³ The *Fourth* and *Fifth Sibylline*

Oracles (late first and early second century respectively) also accuse the Romans of adultery and pederasty (5.166) and of prostituting boys and pure women, as well as of matricide and diverse incestuous relations (5.386–94), asserting that the “holy people” avoid adultery and pederasty (4.34, 5.430). The *Oracles* castigate Rome as conqueror and ruler; a standard use of enslaved prisoners of war was to put them in brothels, and the prophet denounces it as the victimization of (Jewish) children.

Wisdom of Solomon (late first century bce–early first century ce) inculcates the pursuit of Wisdom. Strongly personified and praised in Platonizing language (7: 22–8: 1), she is the consort of both Solomon and the deity (8: 2–9: 12). “Solomon” lauds (Jewish) virtue against idolatrous vice, arguing that the folly of worshiping inert images is the source of moral stupidity (Wisdom 13–15), including adultery and other forms of sexual immorality (14: 12, 24–6). This argument would be formative for Paul’s diatribe in Romans 1: 18–32.

Another example of wisdom literature from the Roman era is the *Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides*, a didactic poem written in archaizing Greek. A collection of maxims addressed to the (free, male) paterfamilias, it claims the Greek poet of the sixth century bce as its author (1–2). Since this poem appears to have been formed in part by the Septuagint (LXX), includes vocabulary from the Hellenistic era, and appears to be cognizant of Stoicism, scholars attribute it to a Jew of the first century bce or ce. The later date fits better with the advice on sex and family, which resonates both with the Augustan promotion of family values and with the views of Philo.

The poem opens with a summary of the decalogue, beginning with the sixth commandment of the Septuagint, “you shall not commit adultery” (Deut 5: 17 LXX, cf. Exod 20: 13 LXX), rendered as: “neither plunder marriage nor arouse male love [*arsena Kuprin*]” (line 3). In this very Greek paraphrase, the commandment evokes the Roman criminalizations of adultery and of some forms of male–male sex. In the last section of the poem the sixth commandment is expanded into counsel on sexual morality, household management (*oikonomia*), and *pietas* (175–225). The poet is guided by the procreative demands of nature and the imperative of restraint, expressed in the warning:

Do not pour yourself into unchecked love [*erōs*] of a wife/
woman

For Eros is not a god, but a passion annihilating all.

(*Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides* 193–4)

In lines 175–8, a condemnation of celibacy, childlessness, and adultery echoes the Julian marriage laws. An abbreviated treatment of

forbidden relations (179–83) precedes a series of sins that in some way thwart procreation: abortion and exposure of children (184–5), “laying a hand” on a pregnant wife (sleeping with her, or beating her, 186), castration of a youth (187), sex with animals (188), “shameful” forms of sex with one’s wife (189), “unnatural,” male-to-male sex (190–1), women imitating the sex of men (192). Warning against too ardent sex even with a wife (193–4), the poem praises marital affection (195–7) and prohibits raping a virgin (198), marrying for dowry (199–204), multiple marriages (perhaps polygamy; 205), and quarreling with kin about possessions (206).

Particularly noteworthy is the childrearing advice. In marked contrast to Sirach, the author counsels against too harsh disciplining of sons, delegating rebukes to a mother or the elders (207–9). Protecting children from sexual predators is paramount (217). In contrast to what one finds in Sirach (26: 10–12; 42: 9–11), in *Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides* sons seem more vulnerable (210–14) than daughters (215–16). The poem devotes a few lines to friendship (218–19) and to the reverence due to elders (220–2). The advice closes with notably enlightened counsel on the treatment of slaves, both one’s own slaves and those of others (223–7).

Three aspects of the sexual counsels sound particularly Roman and also appear in Philo. The first is the command “do not pimp [*proagōgēsēs*] your wife” (177). The husband as pimp reflects a Roman anxiety canonized by the Julian law on adultery, which stipulated that a husband who tolerated his wife’s adultery or remarried her after a divorce for adultery could be charged with pimping (*lenocinium*). Similarly, Philo’s discussion of Deuteronomy 24: 1–4, which prohibits remarrying a wife one has divorced after the end of her subsequent marriage, identifies this crime as both adultery and “procuring” (*proagōgeian*; in the terms of the Julian law, *lenocinium*). Castigating the husband for “softness and unmanliness” (*malakias kai anandrias*) and the divorced and remarried wife as unfaithful, Philo accuses her of “transgressing her original bonds” by “choosing new loves over old” (Philo, *Special Laws* 3.31) and so falling from the ideal of the *univira* (D’Angelo 2006, 77–8). Second, *Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides* may be the first Jewish text to show an interest in sex between women—probably what is meant by “nor let the more female imitate the bed of men” (192). Sex between women became a focus of sexual anxiety for some Roman writers, particularly in the early empire (Brooten 1996, 42–66).⁴ Philo twice uses the word-pair *gunandros* (f.) and *androgunos* (m.), respectively of women and men who emulate clothing or roles assigned to the opposite sex (*Virtues* 21, *Sacrifices* 100; Szesnat 1999, 142–5). A third aspect of the poem that places it in the first century ce, the fear that curled and long hair marked boys as sexually

available (210–14), also appears in Philo (below).

Philo: Good and Bad Sex in the Philosophy of Moses

Both a philosopher and a civic leader in the very substantial Jewish community of Alexandria, Philo defined Jewish identity as distinct from Egyptian and Greek identities, but related to Roman identity through pursuit of the virtues of religion (*eusebeia*, the equivalent of *pietas*) and restraint (*enkrateia*; Niehoff 2001: 75–110). Jewish sexual mores, Philo contends, demonstrate that the law produces more excellent degrees of these virtues.

Sexual and gendered imagery suffuse Philo's work. “Male” and “female,” popularly understood as superior and inferior, function as philosophical categories for him (Baer 1970). His anthropological and epistemological allegory of Genesis reads the man (Adam, male human being) as mind (*nous*) and the woman (Eve) as sense perception (*aisthēsis*). The (female) serpent is pleasure (*hēdonē*), one of the four Stoic passions (*pathē*), and, in keeping with the Genesis narrative, the beginning of trouble (see, e.g., *Allegory of the Laws*, passim, but especially 2: 157 and 165–6; *Questions on Genesis* 1.25, 29, 30; *On the Cherubim* 40–60).

Surprisingly, a few traces of the celebration of eros seem to have escaped into Philo's account of the meeting of the first man and woman, apparently love at first sight:

Once arrived, Eros, bringing them together as two sections [*ditta tmēmata*] of one creature, fits them into one, establishing in each longing for union with the other to make their like. This longing gives birth to pleasure ...(*Creation of the World* 152)

Clearly this passage derives from Aristophanes' myth (Plato, *Symposium* 189C–93E; see especially 190D–E), with which Philo is familiar, if disapproving (*Contemplative Life* 63). But for Philo the story ends badly; the birth of pleasure is the beginning of a guilty life (*Creation of the World* 151). Although he elsewhere suggests that Adam's speech in Gen 2: 23 might have been inspired by the loveliness of the newly created woman (*Questions on Genesis* 1.28), the problem seems to be the arrival of woman, or *aisthēsis*, and of pleasure, *hēdonē*. Eros himself is a beneficent force in Philo, a divine gift, winged and heavenly, as it was for his Roman contemporaries: the two powers of God, represented by the Cherubim on the ark, gaze with desire

(*pothos*) upon each other, “as the gift-loving God breathes down upon them winged and heavenly Eros” (*Cherubim* 20). The one who is free of the passions, too, is inhabited by “winged and heavenly Eros”—the desire of bodiless and incorruptible goods, of knowledge, of piety, of wisdom, of *paideia* (*On Drunkenness* 136, 159, 85; *Creation* 5, 70, 77; *Abraham* 65; see also *Contemplative Life* 59, *Virtues* 55). There is also a common and vulgar (*pandēmos*) Eros, an injurious and debilitating passion (*Contemplative Life* 60, *The Worse Attacks the Better* 99). Yet, for Philo, Eros makes the world go round, causing its motion and cohesion (*Cherubim* 111).

Philo's sexual mores in the holy *politeia* revise Plato's “one law” for controlling pleasure (*Laws* 835D–42A):⁵ to touch no free women except one's own wife, to sow no illegitimate seed with concubines, no barren seed with males (see Plato, *Laws* 841D). This procreative principle is Philo's measure for legitimate sex; it also emerges in Seneca (*To Helvia* 13.3) and Musonius Rufus (*Discourse* 12, 13A, 14, 15). K. Gaca designates it “procreationism” and credits it to the influence of Pythagoreanism on these three writers (2003, 207–9). But the Roman political milieu shared by Philo, Seneca, and Musonius was as important as their philosophical origins.

The *Hypothetica*, the most explicitly apologetic of Philo's works, contrasts the law of Moses with legal systems that allow mitigation of or escape from punishments. He begins with the penalties for sexual offenses:

If you engage in pederasty [*paiderastēis*], if you commit adultery, if you rape a child—do not mention a male child, but even a female—likewise if you prostitute yourself, if also you submit to [*pathēis*] something beyond the age—or think of it, or intend it—the penalty is death. (7.1)

Here Philo identifies sexual crimes as any first-century Roman writer in Greek would, but he insists on a penalty that far exceed Roman penalties of exile and confiscation—perhaps the mitigations and escapes he deplores. Leviticus does prescribe death for adultery and male homoeroticism (20: 10, 13), but Philo has oversimplified the case of rape and, in his eagerness to assert the law's superior rigor, has extended the biblical penalties to intended crimes. The apologetic intent also emerges in *On Joseph*, where Philo's hero boasts that, in contrast to others, “we descendants of the Hebrews” are so careful of temperance that death is the penalty even for prostitutes (43; compare his *Special Laws* 3.51 on Deut 23: 17).

In *The Decalogue* and *Special Laws* Philo comes close to creating a realm of the sexual. The ten words (*logoi*) or oracles (*logia*, *chresmoi*) of the decalogue are divided into two “pentads,” the first on

responsibilities to the deity and to parents as representatives of the divine, and the second on responsibilities to human beings. Each commandment functions as a summary or topic (*kephalaion*) for the specific laws articulated throughout the Pentateuch. The first law of the second “pentad” is “you shall not commit adultery” (Deut 5: 18 LXX; see Exod 20: 13 LXX). It takes first place because adultery is the “greatest of injuries/injustices,” assaulting families and cities (Philo, *Decalogue* 121; see his *Joseph* 44). Arising from the most dangerous *pathos*, pleasure (*Decalogue* 122; *Special Laws* 3.8), it undermines both the social order and the life of virtue.

Collecting the laws touching sex, *Special Laws* 3.7–82 explains them through the twin principles of restraint over pleasure and civic responsibility. Being woman-crazy for one's own wife is blameworthy, but at least natural; adulterous desire, in its drive to destroy families, is an unnatural disease of the soul (9–11). Detailing the noxious effects of various incestuous relations on civic life, Philo supplies examples from Persian and Greek ethnography and history (13–28). His Roman context emerges in an acknowledgment of the benefits of exogamy (25). Intermarriage with foreigners, on the other hand, is dangerous to piety (29). Equally problematic is sex that is for pleasure alone and frustrates procreation: sex with a menstruating woman (32–3), sex with a sterile woman (34–6), pederasty and its culmination—the self-castration of the “priests of Demeter” (37–42)—bestiality (43–50), sex with a prostitute (51) all indulge pointless pleasure while wasting seed and so err against *enkrateia*, while they also evade the responsibility of producing new citizens. His interpretation of the seventh commandment inveighs against infanticide and the exposure of children (110–19).

The tenth and last oracle (“you shall not desire/covet”) also functions as a summary or topic regulating *epithumia* (*Decalogue* 142–53, 173–4, *Special Laws* 4.78–131). Defined as “desire for what one lacks” and identified as the source of all evils, profane or sacred (4.85, 84), *epithumia* is by no means limited to sex. In fact eros is its “least offspring” (*brachutaton engonon*), yet this runt of the epithymetic litter has often spread disasters throughout the whole world (4.85; probably an allusion to the war against Thebes, see 3.16, as well as to the Trojan war and to the Roman civil war against Antony and Cleopatra). Desire turns its victims into criminals, whose crimes vary according to its object: money, glory, power, physical beauty, speech, food, and drink (4.87–91). Those who desire physical beauty (i.e. beautiful bodies, in the idiom of Plato's *Symposium*) become corrupters, adulterers, pederasts, zealots of incontinence and sex (4.89; see *Hypothetica* 7.1, cited above). Under the tenth oracle are arrayed all laws pertaining to food, that gateway indulgence. Sacrificial

prescriptions and ritual observances as well as the dietary laws discipline desire (98–125). The incident of the manna and quails (Numbers 11) drives home his point: the Israelites' demand for meat issued in a fatal gluttony, commemorated in the place-name “Graves/Monuments of Desire” (126–31).

The serpentine threat of pleasure also emerges when Philo answers those who ridicule circumcision. He carefully lays out four traditional, more or less hygienic or medical reasons for the practice, then produces two of his own: circumcision symbolizes (1) cutting away excessive pleasure, since the intercourse of man with woman wins first place among pleasures; and (2) curtailing one's pride in the god-like ability to make a human being (*Special Laws* 1.1; see *Migration of Abraham* 92, *Questions on Genesis* 3.52).

In the material discussed so far, homoeroticism receives no more attention than other sexual crimes. But Philo's anxiety about it emerges in two more areas: the crime of Sodom and the banquets. Philo is the first surviving interpreter to identify the crime of Sodom as male–male sex. In his account of Abraham's life, the cities of the plain are said to have practiced every sort of wickedness, but especially adultery and (or followed by?) male–male sex (*Abraham* 133–46). The latter so changed their bodies that the active partner became infertile and the passive partners were afflicted with the “female disease” or “disease of effemination” (133–6; Swancutt 2003: 200–2). Eliminating this evil was the deity's goal in destroying Sodom and Gomorrah while increasing the population of chaste cities (137). Sterility was suggested to Philo by his translation of Sodom as “blindness” and “barrenness” (*Drunkenness* 22, *Dreams* 2.192, *Preliminary Studies* 109, *Confusion of Tongues* 27). He justifies Lot's offer to the rapists by allegorizing the angels as male (better) thoughts, and the daughters as female (inferior) thoughts, which can be abandoned to preserve the better (*Questions on Genesis* 4.37–8). Elsewhere he reads the angels as divine Thoughts, evoking the older emphasis on the violation of divine beings (*Confusion of Tongues* 27).

Male homoerotic practice plays an important role in the banquets (*sumposia*), which Philo contrasts with the banquet of the ascetic group he describes in *Contemplative Life*. Contemporary banquets are the setting for gluttony and drunkenness. Philo characterizes their expense and luxury as “Italic” (not Roman), but now aped by Greek and barbarian alike. The expense includes displaying enticingly beautiful slave boys of varying ages as table servers. Philo's description of the clothing and hairdo of the “big boys” is so detailed that J. J. Pollini has used it to identify this hairdo on numerous artworks of the Flavian and Trajanic era, as well as on a few earlier ones. Consisting of a curled crown over long loose hair the coiffure

seems to have identified these boys as slaves and as sexually available (see *Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides* 210–14; Seneca, *Letters* 95.24). Pollini finds this hairdo on one of the attendant youths in the representation of the triumph over Judea on the arch of Titus (2003, 149–66). Josephus' description of the triumph suggests that these attendants were Jewish captives (*Jewish War* 7.118, 138).

The banquets of Socrates, from the supposedly exemplary Greek past, were equally problematic. Xenophon's was merely dissolute and “rather human,” but Plato's, while claiming a discourse of heavenly Eros and Aphrodite, was about nothing but “the *erōs* of men for males differing from themselves only in age”—that is, the sexual use of free-born boys. This practice destroys *andreia* (courage/manliness) and produces the “female disease” in boys' souls, reducing the beloved boy to the status of a girl under pursuit, ruining the lover by diverting him from his private and civic responsibilities, and devastating the city through depopulation (57–63).

On the Contemplative Life leads to a further aspect of Philo's sexual concerns: an incipient interest in permanent sexual abstinence. The *Therapeutai*, both men and women (the latter “mostly elderly virgins,” 68), live an eremetical life. Their banquet is devoted to contemplation and choral performance and served by free youths whose dress marks them off from slaves—and so from sexual availability (70–2). The communal Essenes are likewise said to be sexually abstinent, or rather to reject marriage on the grounds of the moral inferiority of women (*Hypothetica* 11.14–17), and to exclude youths as unstable and liable to passions (11.3). Philo also seems to have read sexual abstinence (at least for women) into the patriarchal history: the wives of the patriarchs are said to have been virtues, who conceived from the deity but bore children to their husbands. Sarah was restored to virginity (*Cherubim* 44–52).

This interest is not limited to Philo. Both Pliny the Elder (*Natural History* 5.15.73) and Josephus (*Jewish War* 2.120, *Jewish Antiquities* 18.21) likewise describe the Essenes as celibate. Like Philo's, Josephus' explanation for this choice is the divisiveness of women, described in highly misogynist terms. In all cases the authors expect their audiences, both Roman and Jewish, to find abstinence admirable. Josephus also knows of Essenes who marry “not for pleasure, but for the sake of children,” going so far as to subject wives to a three-year pre-marital trial to prove that they are fertile (*Jewish War* 2.160–1).

Josephus: After the War

While Philo defended Jewish morality amidst the anti-Jewish rioting and polemics of Roman Alexandria, Josephus contended with the aftermath of the war, when Jews were cast as the villainous and defeated enemies from whom the Flavians had saved Rome (Goodman 1999, 55–8). Tacitus' account of the war includes numerous slanders including the charge that the Jews are “a people extraordinarily lustful” (*proiectissima ad libidinem gens*), who refuse only—but adamantly—to have sex with non-Jewish women. Yet “among themselves anything goes” (*inter se nihil illicitum*: *Histories* 5.5).

In *Against Apion* Josephus responds to similar charges, arguing that the Jews value piety and restraint (as do Romans). His defense of Jewish mores moves from laws touching the divine (2.190–8) to “marriage laws,” which begin with the principle that “the law acknowledges only natural intercourse with a woman, and only for the sake of children.” Sex between males, adultery, and sex with a betrothed girl are punished with death (2.199, 201; compare *Jewish Antiquities* 3.274–5). The Jewish law is equally inexorable toward slaves (*Against Apion* 2.215), while the Greeks (not, notice, the Romans) attribute these crimes to the gods (2.244–6, 274–5).

The law prohibits infanticide and equates abortion with infanticide (*Against Apion* 2.202; see also *Sibylline Oracles* 3.765), prohibitions that Musonius also attributes to lawgivers (*Discourses* 15). Even legitimate sex involves a soul dividing and passing into another body, and so it requires bathing (*Against Apion* 2.202–3). Marriage should not be pursued for a dowry and should not involve deceit or force but rather requires the consent of the authorized kinsman (2.200). Wives must be subordinate in all, as women are inferior in all (2.201; cf. Philo, *Hypothetica* 7.3). Josephus' own choice of his third wife is exemplary: Jewish, she is of a good and distinguished family and excels other women in her mores (*Life* 478).

Josephus retails the marital and extra-marital intrigues of the powerful (David, Amnon, Ahab, Jezebel, Antony, Cleopatra, Herod, Salome) with a combination of zest, censoriousness, and misogyny familiar from his younger contemporaries Tacitus and Suetonius. But he carefully notes that David was generally just, pious, and devoted to the ancestral law before he retells David's theft of Uriah's wife (*Jewish Antiquities* 7.130–58); and he precedes the story of the expulsion of the Jews from Rome over the defrauding of a woman proselyte with a narrative in which the worship of Isis is used to seduce a matron (*Jewish Antiquities* 18.65–77). He seems less worried by male homoeroticism than Philo is. As do the older texts, he explains the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah as divine judgment; the cities were arrogant, impious, and inhospitable (*misoxenoi*: *Jewish Antiquities* 1.194). But he also constructs the encounter between the two angelic

messengers and the men of Sodom as pederastic: the angels were “youths of extraordinary beauty” (*Jewish Antiquities* 1.200). In his account of the rise of Herod, Josephus relates a story that connects pederasty to the abuse of power—and specifically to Roman power, as in the *Sibylline Oracles*. Antony, tempted by portraits of Mariamne and Aristoboulos, sent for the latter, who was 16 and “at that age most beautiful.” Herod refused to let him go, knowing that “Antony, powerful as was no other among the Romans of the time, was ready to subject him to erotic use, and able to pursue pleasure openly because of his power” (*Jewish Antiquities* 15.29). The narrative of David and Jonathan is given considerable attention in *Jewish Antiquities*, but for the most part as a friendship and political alliance. Its affective aspect emerges most strongly in a parting scene: “embracing each other and weeping, they said goodbye at length, mourning for the youth begrudged them and their coming separation, which seem to them no different from death” (*Jewish Antiquities* 6.240–1).

Conclusions

In the texts I have discussed, discourse about and representations of sexual mores work hard at the construction of identity. In sectarian works like *Jubilees* and the Dead Sea Scrolls, purity concerns draw the boundaries that enable their claim to the heritage of Israel. Sirach offers instruction in the practices of adult manhood. As Rome dominated the Mediterranean, boundaries between Jew and outsider were increasingly defended by presenting a competitively stringent sexual morality; this strategy also claimed for Jews moral stature in the Roman world.

Is it possible to draw a coherent picture of distinctively Jewish discourses of sexuality in the years between 200 bce–200 ce? Both Jews and their detractors insist that Jews do not marry outside of their *ethnos*. But how much does this differ from the Roman requirement of citizenship for *connubium*? Philo, Josephus, and others insist that Jews are required to raise all their children. Again, exposure was also contested by Roman writers such as Musonius Rufus. Philo and Josephus, in overtly apologetic contexts, insist that their ancestral laws are more demanding and the punishments for transgression more stringent—clearly intending to demonstrate that the Jewish law is more productive of virtue, especially the virtues of *enkrateia* and piety. For the most part, sexual counsels are conventional and occupy a very limited scope of these works. The exception is Philo, whose engagement with sexual and gendered

imagery is extraordinary. Despite his rejection of Plato's *Symposium*, it seems that the idea of the lover of wisdom as producing spiritual children fixed his attention on the realities of sex and reproduction.

Josephus is by no means the last of Jewish writers in Greek; *Sibylline Oracles* 5 and 4 Maccabees, which reveals concerns with women's sexual probity (18: 7–10), probably date from the early second century ce. It is probable that there were other Jewish writers in Greek in the second and third century ce. But the catastrophic revolts of 117–18 and 132–5 and the eventual triumph of Christianity meant that Jewish literature that had survived was identified as Jewish by the use of Hebrew and Aramaic. The writers I have discussed were largely taken over by Christians. They had little direct impact on the rich and complex traditions of the Mishnah, Jerusalem Talmud, Babylonian Talmud, and Midrashim, although the rabbis continued to engage with Greek and Roman culture on multiple levels. It was in Christianity that the Jewish writings in Greek, and especially Philo, produced their impact. But that is another story.

Guide to Further Reading

The Loeb Classical Library provides texts and translations for Philo and Josephus. Translations of Sirach, Wisdom, Susanna, and Greek Esther are found in editions of the Bible that include Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical works. The Dead Sea Scrolls are available in translation in Garcia-Martinez 1994. The other texts cited here are available in translation in Charlesworth 1983–5 and in Kraemer 2004.

To the best of my knowledge, there is no single one-volume treatment of sexuality in this period. Nissinen 1998 gives a very short treatment of some of the texts in a chapter on Judaism that includes rabbinic materials and offers a chapter on the Hebrew Bible. Loader's three volumes (2004, 2007, 2009) provide exhaustive examination of philological, ritual, legal, and ethical aspects of these texts, edited in their original languages and accompanied by translations; the volumes also give access to an extensive scholarly bibliography on these issues. Loader 2011, on Philo and Josephus, was too recent to be consulted for this article. Gaca 2003 attempts to integrate Philo's sexual stipulations into a picture of the development of philosophy from Plato to the third century Christian philosophers. Szesnat's articles on Philo (1999, 1998a, 1998b) are more directly concerned with sexuality and its construction. For the succeeding period, rabbinic Judaism (200–600), Satlow's work on sexuality and on marriage (2001, 1995) has located Jewish discussion and practice in the context

of the ancient Mediterranean and of Mesopotamia. The contributions of Boyarin (1993) have also been important. Levinson 1996, 1997, and 2000 investigates the role of gender and sexuality as vehicles for the construction of identity.

Notes

- 1 All translations not otherwise acknowledged are mine. The Hebrew text differs considerably from the LXX, in 16: 50 using *tw'bh*, a word translated “abomination” in the prohibitions of male–male sex (Greek to *anomēma*, crime), but with broad application.
- 2 See also her treatment of 4MMT B 72–85, pp. 82–91.
- 3 The date and exact prescriptions of this law are far from clear; I have accepted 149 from Treggiari 1991, 277.
- 4 The status of women who “rub together” figured in a dispute over which women could marry priests credited to the pre-rabbinic schools of Hillel and Shammai, which dates to the early to mid-first century ce. But the debate first appears in the fifth-century *Jerusalem Talmud*, so dating it to the first century is problematic.
- 5 Gaca derives another principle, “sexual apostasy,” from Philo's monotheism and interpretation of the story of Phineas (Gaca 2003, 122–4, cf. 210–12; *Moses* 1.296–302, Numbers 25).

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Chapter 33

Early Christian Sexuality

Kathy L. Gaca

Pre-Christian Theology and Sexuality

Several key apostolic and patristic principles adapted from the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament), Pythagoreanism, and Plato came to define emergent orthodox Christian sexual norms and to differentiate them from the more diverse and pluralistic norms that informed Greek and Roman sexualities. These principles helped lead to the highly restrictive sexual regimen that has historically characterized the dominant tenor of Christianity and set it apart straightaway from sexually ascetic trends in Greco-Roman society, such as the sexual asceticism of the Pythagoreans and the later Pythagorean-influenced Stoicism of the younger Seneca.

To understand these principles, it is illuminating to start from a theological perspective. Try to imagine a hypothetical subfield in modern theology where the nature of Aphrodite, her existence, and her erotic engagement with human beings and other animals are topics of sustained and serious study. The very thought of such a theological inquiry seems out of place now, and perhaps even amusing, because a credible theology presupposes the living presence of reverent worshippers along with supporting institutions and personnel, which the Greek and Roman gods have long been denied and now no longer have. The temples are tourist attractions; any surviving divine statues are museum pieces; and the pre-Christian Greeks and Romans are dead. Other aspects of the Greco-Roman legacy live on respectably, such as drama, sculpture, public architecture, and philosophy. Yet the practices and ideas about the

gods from classical antiquity are conspicuous for their looming absence from contemporary religion and theology, even though *theologia* as a word, idea, and field of study about the nature(s) of divinity originated in Greek religion, philosophy, and ethnography about gods in the Greek pantheon and among people of other ethnicities—for instance Heraclitus (fl. c. 500 bce), DL 9.6 = DK A1, 1, p. 140; Pherecydes (fl. 544 bce), DK B2, B4, B10; Hellanicus (c. 480–395 bce), Fr. 87 *FGrH*; and Diodorus Siculus (fl. c. 60–30 bce), 1.23.6–29.6, 6.1.1–10. This extensive study of Greek and other-ethnic theology was eagerly taken up and adapted by Romans such as Varro (116–27 bce, see August. *Civ. Dei* 1) and in Cicero's (106–43 bce) *De natura deorum*. The monotheizing subsector in this field, as seen in the *logoi* about *theos* that proceed from Philolaus and Plato (e.g., Philolaus DK B14, 1.20, and Pl. *R.* 379a5–6) through Stoicism and on into Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism, is but one part of the much larger field of Greek and Roman theology: the part that withstood the development of Christianity. This sector of Greek monotheizing theology is still taken seriously, as a kind of prologue to Christian theology as the real thing (Gilson 2002), because patristic Christian writers such as Clement of Alexandria, the Cappadocian church fathers, and Augustine treated this sector as one congenial with *theos* in the New Testament and Septuagint (the Greek Old Testament) and with *deus* in Latin biblical translations.

By contrast, Greco-Roman views about pluralistic deities and Greco-Roman accounts or *logoi* about gods and goddesses (*hoi/hai theoi* or *ta theia* in Greek) are “desperately alien” and difficult to take seriously as a set of living beliefs and reflections about the nature of deities, because this major zone of religious and theological ante-Christianity was treated as anti-Christianity by the apostle Paul and the church fathers, such that the cultural spread and prevalence of Christianity “created an unbridgeable divide from the pagan religions that came before” (Finley 1985, xiii). This area has been tamed and treated as a post-Christian myth, where the gods do not exist beyond images and stories about them. Yet to understand one of the driving motives behind the pronounced tendency toward sexual renunciation in early Christianity (with or without the escape clause that allows for Christian marital procreation), it is critical to appreciate that the ontological status of Aphrodite has not always been on par with Tinkerbelle. In emergent orthodox and even more sexually restrictive trajectories of early Christianity, Aphrodite was one of the most formidable and dangerous gods, who needed to be driven from the domain of the Christian Lord and made inconsequential, along with her sacred icons, rites, and temple precincts. The biblical origins and development of the early Christian ideological forces leading to her

demise are key to comprehending the otherwise baffling restrictive Christian sexual norms, which still have a hold on society now, in transmuted guises.

Biblical Monolatry and Its Sexual Rules

Within formative early Christianity's core tradition of Septuagint monotheism—not its extreme fringe, but its Mosaic core in Greek translation—one cardinal rule is reiterated and emphasized: uphold the premier commandment to worship the Lord God alone (Exod 20: 3–6, Deut 5: 7–10). No conduct is more deleterious to his collective people than for them to fall into apostate rebellion back into the old mores of worshipping other gods. This kind of apostasy, rites practiced in obeisance to another god or gods—as opposed to, say, becoming agnostic or atheist but staying quiet and inconspicuous about it—gained this distinctive capacity of being considered most harmful to one and all, because it was high treason against the community's testamental bond or pact with the Lord alone, and thus it was thought to unleash his retaliatory wrath against the rebels and the community as a whole (Lev 26: 1–39; Deut 8: 19–20, 9: 12–29, 29: 9–28). Firm loyalty and obedience, however, meant remaining on the Lord's merciful side, and that guaranteed communal well-being (Deut 4: 29–31).

So strong was this view as prescribed in its early formative period that it called for the urgent preventive measure of destroying people en masse in the promised land—including religiously alien ethnic groups such as the Canaanites (Exod 23: 20–33, Deut 7: 17–26), and even one's own family members and neighbors (Exod 32: 26–9; Deut 13: 6–12, 17: 2–7)—for the intolerable act of worshipping other deities (e.g., Num 25:1–18). The degree to which these practices were carried out remains in dispute, but the stated policy is clear. It was also considered a required procedure to demolish the sacred spaces and objects devoted to other gods (Exod 23: 23–4, 34: 11–16; Deut 7: 5–6, 12: 2–3). These Pentateuchal rules are presented as an already binding pact, which the Lord's people cannot reject without being destroyed (Levenson 1985, 19–20), and they should not be downplayed in their origins, or diachronically, as though they were nothing but formidable policy merely because the evidence for their practice is disputable (Collins 2003).

Historically speaking, then, biblical monotheism is better termed

monolatry, because its driving force is to worship one Lord alone, Yahweh originally, conjoined with antipathy toward other gods whose ontological status is ambivalent from the perspective of the Lord's adherents. In some respects, the other deities are considered to exist as baleful demons or powers, not to be false in the sense of non-existent fictions, although that is what they polemically are called and what they culturally become once a critical mass of their former worshippers turns away from them to worship the Lord alone in one of the three main historical divisions of his identity (Yahweh, Christ the Lord, Allah). The tendency to demonize other gods until they become culturally outmoded proves important below for understanding the early Christian urge to renounce sexual activity as the bastion of Aphrodite's powers.

From Yahwist to early Christian times, many basic aspects of this testamental pact with the Lord proved strikingly mutable, including his divine nature, the geographical breadth of cultures designated as his people, the methods by which he shows his wrath against his people worshipping other gods, and the enterprise of appeasement that the people are taught in order to cleanse themselves and their land from the worship of other gods. But several historical constants persist, one of which is critical here. While the Old Testament highlights the dangers of rites performed publicly, in groups, for other gods, and makes them all seem like throbbing orgies, one of the most dangerous conduits back into such worship was the making of religiously mixed marriages or mixed quasi-marriages that retained an orientation toward deities other than the Lord (Exod 34: 15–16, Deut 7: 1–6, Judg 3: 6). Even the wedding ceremonies would have been apostasy, given their honoring of the gods of a religiously alien spouse. Solomon's many religiously alien wives and concubines as well as Ahab's Sidonian wife Jezebel exemplify this danger from a biblical perspective (1 Kgs 11: 1–3, 21: 25–6).

Religiously mixed marriages and quasi-marriages were formed mainly in the following ways. First, men among the Lord's people took as wives or quasi-wives (e.g., concubines) virgin girls or young women raised to worship deities other than the Lord. These unions were formed either with parental approval or by the radically different procedure of conquest and abduction of young female captives through armed force (e.g., Deut 21: 10–13), or through the purchase of subjugated female captives or their debased daughters when they were trafficked on a local market. Apart from any quasi-wives who were abducted at too young an age to recall the religions, cultures, languages, and peoples from which they were taken, the religiously alien female spouses continued, or at least tried to continue, their other-theistic religious practices after marriage. To the extent that

they were successful, they carried this practice into the next generation by raising their children to be polytheistic and/or syncretistic rather than devotees strictly of the Lord. This practice is exemplified by the Baalim-worshipping Gomer, who, on the most streamlined autobiographical reading of Hosea, had the dismal fate of becoming the wife of the prophet Hosea (fl. late eighth century bce), when he bought her at a purchase price so low (Hos 3: 2, cf. Exod 21: 32) that there is a good likelihood she was trafficked and purchased by him to be his wife in the Lord, not granted to him through her parents' consent. By whatever method Gomer became Hosea's wife, she was then under his power, in a marriage devoted to the Lord, where she memorably resisted Hosea's efforts to compel her to convert and influenced their children accordingly, thereby contributing to an unbearable social crisis of religious diversity in the Lord's domain, as Hosea saw it.

Second, Gentile men also took as wives or quasi-wives virgin girls or young women who were raised to be followers of the Lord alone, such that the female spouses became culturally surrounded and influenced by other-theistic and commonly polytheistic norms. Here too the marital or quasi-marital unions involved parental approval or abduction through armed force and trafficking (Joel 4: 1–3, not earlier than post-exilic, i.e., mid-to-late fifth century bce). Even if these women remained dedicated to the Lord, the odds were great that their children would grow up to be syncretistic or polytheistic, given their cultural surroundings. In the Book of Esther, a biblical romance novel, the marriage (with familial approval) of the Jewish Esther to the Persian King Xerxes (historical reign 486–465 bce) is an elite fairy tale expression of this practice, but its story line avoids the problem of religiously diverse child rearing by not granting this Jewish queen of Persia any children by Xerxes.

It was a recognized danger among the Lord's people to see their daughters and sisters married with parental approval to Gentile men. This meant girls and young women in the community likely being lost to polytheism, along with ensuing generations of children descended from their wombs. For example, the intertestamental book of *Jubilees* (second century bce) insists that, if “any man among Israel gives his daughter or sister to any foreigner, he is to die” by stoning, and the woman is to be burned. Just as the brothers of Dinah, Jacob's daughter, refused to give Dinah to the Hivite Shechem as his wife (Gen 34: 1–31), so too the people of Israel must refuse to give their virgins in marriage to men among religiously alien “peoples of the foreskin” (*Jub.* 30.3, 30.7, 30.12, Vanderkam). By this understanding, Jews in the position of Esther's uncle Mordecai and Esther herself should be killed. This viewpoint, though disturbing, supports the

Pentateuchal dictate to eliminate community insiders, including family members, who break their pact with the Lord and pursue other gods.

Further, no ancient sources are more haunting than the biblical about the wrenching loss of having sisters, daughters, and young mothers taken from their communities by armed force and trafficked into religiously alien lands as concubines or the like by conquerors or profiteering raiders (Gaca 2010, 138). So devastating was this practice that it became a biblical emblem of the Lord's wrath, something God would never condone being inflicted on his people unless they were religiously unfaithful to him (Gaca 2003, 175–6).

Consequently, within biblical monolatry there is a very strong pull toward the norm that girls and women should stay on the inside of the Lord's community, where they are ostensibly both protected and protective by copulating, procreating, and raising children strictly for the Lord, and not for any competing goddesses or gods in the vicinity. Given the testamental bond, this is the *sine qua non* condition to keep their children, their people, and themselves safe from conquering armies and marauders. This idea is very powerful in its appeal to the desire to nurture and keep loved ones out of danger.

Goddesses: Their Sexual Import and Biblical Danger

In polytheism, by contrast, well before the historical beginnings of Christianity and even before Moses, the powers of sexuality and procreation over humans and other animals were strongly vested in deities, especially (but not only) those in female form: goddesses, who were thought to preside over and to be immanent in the powers of sexual arousal and activity. Further, women and girls in the Near East and in the ancient Mediterranean were strongly acculturated to worship these female deities in ways intimately bound up with their sense of themselves and their community roles as sexual and reproductive agents. These goddesses include the nude Ishtar or Queen of Heaven (Greek Astarte) in the Near East and, on the Greek side, her Greek counterpart Aphrodite (Herennius Philo Fr. 2 *FGrH* = Euseb. *Praep. evang.* 1.10.32; Budin 2003), as well as goddesses dating to Mycenaean Linear B, such as Eileithyia, Potnia, Artemis, and Hera. To an extent, going back even before the Bronze Age, they also include goddesses in the prehistory of Old Europe (Gimbutas 2007, 112–215, Goodison and Morris 1998, Baring and Cashford 1993).

Because of this long-standing strength of religious sexual devotion in the partly separate social domain of women and girls in antiquity, female deities central to their sexual and procreative lives and to the well-being of their people proved especially difficult to eradicate once their social groups came to be claimed strictly for the Lord. In one striking instance of this problem, Jeremiah (late seventh century bce) singles out the Queen of Heaven for condemnation. In a confrontational interchange in Egypt with women in Jewish marriages, the women refuse to follow Jeremiah's command to turn away from the Queen of Heaven and to follow the Lord God alone. With the support of their husbands, they insist, "[w]e will carry out our vows to burn sacrifices to the Queen of Heaven and pour drink-offerings to her," practices that they saw as critical for sustaining the well-being of their community. Jeremiah, however, retorts that the Lord's wrath will destroy them and their families, and that this devastation will demonstrate that the Lord's word will prevail (LXX Jer 51: 1–28). It is not clear from Jeremiah whether these wives were (1) raised as polytheistic Ishtar worshippers and living in religiously mixed marriages with Jewish husbands; (2) already self-identified as Jewish adherents of the Lord, but still worshipping Ishtar in their women's social world, with the support of their Jewish and/or Gentile husbands; or (3) some combination of these variables. It is also unclear whether these wives were all in marriages negotiated for them by their parents.

To devotees of the Lord like Jeremiah, these niceties about the wives' religious derivation, identity, and social status as spouses did not matter. In the Lord's domain, which included this diaspora settlement in Egypt as far as Jeremiah was concerned, no marriage, whatever its socially formative basis, could rest content being only partly in the Lord. It needed to be fully in the Lord to avert his wrath and keep his protection. This meant that especially the worship of Ishtar and her kind, goddesses like Aphrodite, had to be driven out of their female strongholds in communities claimed for the Lord, marriage by marriage, family by family, generation after generation, until they became a defunct and distant memory.

One result of the drive to instate biblical monolatry was that the Jewish tendency toward endogamy (the taking of spouses strictly within the already established lineages of the historical Lord's people) came to be reaffirmed as a way to work toward defusing the danger of polytheistic apostasy through religiously mixed marriages. The practice of endogamy is advocated for this purpose in the book of *Tobit* (c. 200 bce). To avoid the fornicating after other gods, which characterized religiously mixed marriages, Tobias is urged by his father not to select a religiously alien wife (*allotria gunē*), but one born

from the seed of his fathers, going back to Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (*Tob.* 4.12).

In Hellenistic Judaism, however, a more adventurous option remained open, which is preceded by and exemplified in the Book of Ruth (perhaps post-exilic). This was to make marriage a kind of outreach practice by which to win new devotees of the Lord from polytheistic communities. For example, male adherents of the Lord could marry women who were raised in other-theistic customs, provided that the women agreed to convert to the way of the Lord, such as the Moabite Ruth, prior to marrying Boaz, agreeing that “your people are my people and your god is my god” (*Ruth* 1: 16). Philo of Alexandria (c. 20 bce–50 ce) indicates that this option was viable in Hellenistic Judaism, and he advocates it himself: “Intermarriages with foreigners lead to new kinships that are not at all inferior to blood relationships” (*Spec.* 3.25). Such marriages are praiseworthy because they help promulgate the way of the Lord and make it more widespread. Philo, however, sternly warns against this conversion outreach going the other way. If the foreign spouses bring religiously alien worship to their marriages and to the Lord's community, then their families fall away into the rebellious worship of other gods. Such religiously deviant marriages are “the beginning and end of the utmost suffering [*barudaimonia*]” in Philo's view (*Spec.* 3.29–30), due to the religious treason long associated with it.

Philo's Safeguard: Keeping Sex Strictly Procreative in the Lord

Going one step further, Philo also reflects a rigorist tendency within Judaism in the Hellenistic era by locating rebellion against the Lord and his rules not only in acts of defiance, but in the desire or impulse to commit such acts. This “forbidden desire” problem in Hellenistic Judaism is in many respects very similar to the problem of the “evil impulse” to disobey the Lord in rabbinic Judaism. But in the Hellenistic Jewish Platonism of Philo, the forbidden desire problem takes on a revolutionary new meaning, influenced by Plato, which added to the drive toward sexual abstinence among post-apostolic and emergent orthodox Christians. Philo takes the lengthy Septuagint version of the tenth commandment against men coveting (*ouk epithumēseis*) their neighbors' property, including the wife, the ox, and the plow, removes these direct objects that designated the kinds of coveting prohibited (*Spec.* 4.78–9, cf. *Decal.* 142, 173–4), and

reinterprets *ouk epithumēseis* as though it were simply the Lord speaking in two-word dictates, like Apollo (e.g., *mēden agan*, “nothing in excess”). Philo explicates this innovative rule as the Lord’s endorsement of Plato’s guidelines for reining in the inherently excessive soul appetites (*epithumiai*) for food, drink, and sexual activity. Philo further urges, as though it were implicit in biblical law, that the Lord’s people should in particular restrain the overweening sexual appetite by making love for no reason other than to procreate within marriage. This dictate, which Philo derived from Pythagoreanism partly as mediated through Plato’s *Laws* (Gaca 2003, 94–116), is at odds with the Hellenistic and Rabbinic Jewish view that husbands and wives should engage in marital sexual intercourse to reaffirm their marital bond, in addition to the important procreative purpose. Philo, by contrast, regards the more restrictive “marital and for procreation only” regimen of the sexual appetite as the Lord’s sure way to prevent his people from ever again falling back into polytheistic worship.

Philo nonetheless continues to be traditional enough in his Judaism that he stops short of equating Jewish marital sexual activity for pleasure or for other non-procreative goals with apostasy. Nonetheless, he comes very close to this viewpoint, for he labels all forms of non-reproductive marital sexual activity as the worship of Aphrodite under her philosophical guise as the immanent power and allure of sexual pleasure. For example, he self-consciously recasts Aphrodite’s sexual powers over humans and over winged, land, and sea animals, as described in the opening of the Homeric *Hymn to Aphrodite* (*Spec.* 3.8–9, cf. *Hymn. Hom. Ven.* 5.1–6), as disreputable obeisance to the powers of sexual pleasure, which the Lord’s people must strive to quell by ideally limiting their sexual drive strictly to a reproductive purpose within marriage. (See D’Angelo in this volume for a broader contextualization of Philo’s sexual ethics within Hellenistic Judaism.)

Paul's Revolutionary Reworking of the Biblical Sexual Rules

Like Philo, the apostle Paul (d. c. 62/65 ce) strongly endorses the idea that membership in the Lord’s community should be measured by its monolatrous code of behavior rather than by its bloodline. But he too reinterprets critical aspects of the testamental pact in breathtaking ways that prove socially revolutionary. First, of course, is the *Christos*

nature of the Lord who is to be worshipped and the identification of *Christos* with Jesus (Fredriksen 2000).

Second, and very importantly, Paul in Romans 1: 18–32 accuses Greeks or Gentiles as an ecumenical whole, and Greeks foremost, of bringing Israel into an idolatrous polytheistic rebellion against the Lord. On his view, they once knew the Lord and recognized him by worshipping him alone. They only seem not to know him now because they and their foolishly so-called wise ancestors abandoned the Lord, just as the Prophets repeatedly assert about historical Israelites and Jews defecting to pursue other gods rather than showing fealty to the Lord alone. As Paul puts it, these polytheistic apostate peoples in the ancient Mediterranean “traded” their worship of God for the worship of many gods and have been egregious “suppressors of the truth” ever since—a veritable *oikoumenē* of rebellious apostates. As a result of this alleged abandonment, God inflicted his wrath upon them and Christ the Lord has come to save them, and rescued they must be, one and all, whether they like it or not (Gaca 1999).

But, whereas the wrathful Old Testament Lord is said mainly to have subjected his apostate peoples to the undeniably ugly, painful, and horrific violence of invading armies, Paul takes the revolutionary step of asserting that the Lord has surrendered his nebulous Greek apostates to the psychological violence of dishonoring sexual passions that were integral to any and all sexual mores involved in worshipping other gods. In other words, to Paul, God does not need invading armies any more in order to exercise his wrath, because other-theistic sexual desires, when put into action, suffice as God's death-bearing wrath—if not now, then in the resurrection to come. In Romans 1: 26–7 Paul highlights female and male homoerotic sexual desires as other-theistic vehicles of the Lord's wrath. Nonetheless, Paul's driving concern was to eliminate the making of religiously mixed heterosexual marriages, as he makes clear in First and Second Corinthians.

Paul maintains that the sexual and reproductive mores in his Greek and Gentile Israel must be devoted strictly to the Lord, through virginity or paired marriage in the body of Christ, as is stated memorably in 2 Corinthians 6: 14–7: 1. The authorship of this passage remains disputed, but its principle about making new marriages is substantively the same as the one Paul indubitably promotes in 1 Corinthians: be Christian and marry a fellow member of Christ the Lord's people if you plan to marry. Second Corinthians 6: 14–7: 1 adopts the same policy, albeit in negative phrasing, with prohibitions. He forbids “the faithful” (*pistoi*) from “entering into alien unions with unbelievers [*apistois*].” The alien unions of primary concern in this passage were religiously pluralistic marriages between Christ worshippers and the worshippers of Greek and Hellenized deities in

Corinth.

In 2 Corinthians, “the faithful” and “the unfaithful” are portrayed as though they were different species that must never sexually bond and produce religiously hybrid children and families. Other emphatic contrasts in 2 Corinthians 6: 14–7: 1 reaffirm this marriage rule by separating Christians from polytheists, as though the latter were a debased species. Christians are vessels of righteousness, light, Christ, and the temple of God, while unbelievers are carriers of lawlessness, darkness, Beliar, and idols (2 Cor 6: 14–16). Second Corinthians thus brings the fervor of *Jubilees* to the emergent social norm of Christian marriage in Greek and other Gentile lands.

Paul in 1 Corinthians 7 extends a special dispensation to already formed polytheistic marriages that promised to become fully Christian through the conversion of one spouse to Christianity. This promise arose because converted spouses learned, as part of their catechism, that they must strive to win for Christ alone their entire family, including their still polytheistic spouses (Hermas, *Visions* 1.3.1–2, Tertullian, *Ad uxorem* 2.7). These marriages were worthy of keeping intact for Paul's mission, considering their auspicious prospects for making the whole family Christian, free and slave members alike. For a Christian to deliberately enter into a religiously mixed marriage was, however, altogether forbidden. The Pauline Christian mission was a rescue effort away from the rebellious pagan worship of alien gods and its punitively wrathful sexual passions, and Paul's marriage program was his means to carry out this rescue.

Ignatius of Antioch (c. 35–107 ce) confirms that the Pauline marriage rule took hold very early in the branch of Christianity that would later define itself as ecclesiastical. Ignatius distinguishes between marriages that are made strictly in Christ the Lord (*gamos kata kurion*) and religiously syncretistic marriages (*Epistola ad Polycarpum* 5.2). Only marriages “in the Lord” were permissible and received the bishop's approval.

Paul's problematic but enormously influential reworking of the rule against the Lord's people participating in other-theistic worship is drawn—with striking liberties—from the Septuagint. Despite intimations in the later sections of Isaiah, the Prophets never commit to formally claiming everyone for the Lord, as Paul does starting with the rebellious Greeks or Gentiles, and, if the latter, the Greeks foremost among the Gentiles. The Prophets did not identify the promised land with the human-inhabited world as a whole. And, as far as polytheistic sexual mores were concerned, the Prophets acknowledged their stimulating pleurability for the participants, which was part of what made them difficult to banish from among the Lord's people. Not so Paul. A leading voice in the distinctively

Christian mode of sexual repression, he identifies the passions of other-theistic sexual desires with God's deadly wrath exercising itself in the very nature of the sexual arousal, homoerotic and heterosexual alike, that seeks to transgress the confines of marital sex fully in Christ or halfway en route toward becoming fully in Christ.

In one respect, however, Paul is relatively a sexual moderate compared to Philo, for he nowhere advocates, or even seems to know, the Pythagorean-based idea that heterosexual copulation should be marital and for procreation only. He never suggests that Christ the Lord's people must abide by this rule. Rather, he sees permissible Christian marital sex as sufficiently justified when spouses service each other's sexual needs so as to keep at bay the dangers of falling into transgressive heterosexual relations, be they other-theistic, extramarital, or both, in the Christian community foremost (1 Cor 7: 2–5). In this respect, Paul remains apostolic and pre-patristic.

Patristic Sexual Restrictions and Their Selective Adaptation of Philo's Safeguard

By contrast, early church fathers partly support Philo's advocating that marriage in the Lord should be for procreation only, and to this extent they formulate the more restrictive position that Christians fall into other-theistic worship unless they limit their marital sexual relations in Christ the Lord to serving the purpose of reproduction. Clement of Alexandria is one prominent advocate of this position, and he melds it with Paul's view that religiously alien sexual passions are the Lord's punishment for apostasy: human eroticism “works death from within,” as an aphrodisiac force, if Christians fail to be strictly reproductive in their marital sexual relations (Clem. Al. *Quis dives*, 25.4–6, and see *Protr.* 102.3). Only strictly reproductive Christian marital sexual activity has received a special dispensation of grace from Christ so as not to be a death-bearing act of Aphrodite worship.

The belief that Christian sexual practices should be for procreation only, not for pleasure, is also represented in the *Apostolic Constitutions* of the fourth century (6.28), a compilation that was later considered Arian but was still a minor source of canon law. Similarly, in the fourth-century *Disputation with a Manichee* by one Joannes (named “Joannes Orthodoxus” partly in light of this work), a dialogue takes place between two men, a Christian orthodox figure and a Manichee.

As the orthodox informs the sexually renunciatory Manichee, the Christian husband knows that the sexual appetite is usable strictly for procreative sexual intercourse with his wife, not for pleasure (41). While Joannes still thinks that even procreative Christian marital intercourse is appetitively driven, and hence not entirely bad, the fourth-century Julian “the Arian” echoes Clement by insisting that Christian procreative marital sex is neither pleasure-oriented nor pleasurable. In his *Commentary on Job*, Julian regards the biblical Job as a kind of prototype of the Christian husband who regards the sex needed to procreate his children as “toils” (*ponoi*). Job and his wife “did not fulfill the passion of pleasure” when copulating. Rather, they did a kind of farming, not oriented toward sexual “delight” (*terpnon*), for the copulation needed to produce children was hard work (*kopos*) and struggle (*mochthos*), not the irrational pleasure (*alogos hēdonē*) that motivates the average herd of ordinary mortals (*Comm. in Job* 2.9, p. 27). Clement's and Julian's careful insistence that pleasure seeking plays no role in reproductive Christian marital sex was an effort to save the viability of Christian reproduction by denying it any connection with Aphrodite. Clement in particular reiterates that a sexually expressed reverence for Aphrodite is inherently an alien and alienating form of religious practice (e.g., *Protr.* 2.13.4, 10.102.3). Her worship is fit for the salacious and the doomed (such as the Carpocratian heretics, *Strom.* 3.10.1–11.1), never for obedient Christians.

From a Greek and Hellenized perspective, by contrast, to make love even for procreation involved the pleasurable act of giving Aphrodite her due. “Each and every mortal being is attentive to the works of Aphrodite with the shapely crown,” as stated in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* (5.1–6). From this perspective, “golden Aphrodite” prevails universally over sexuality, sexual desire, sexual activity, and its inherent delight (*terpnon*, Mimnermus 1.1) and pleasures. Her sexual gifts to humanity are partly a blessing, but they are also problematic, given the torment she can bring along with the excitement of falling into passionate love. In pre-Christian antiquity the Greeks worshipped Aphrodite bodily and in numerous sacred sites as the preeminent deity in the erotic domain. They built and maintained temples to her, sculpted statues to embody her presence, and composed Muse-inspired hymns, poetry, and other writings to explore her powers—all of which was serious theology about Aphrodite. From this long-standing Greek perspective, it was impossible to imagine being sexually aroused or making love without showing Aphrodite her requisite honor and worship, for sexual arousal and activity were the “works [*erga*] of Aphrodite.”

By contrast, the god Eros slipped rather to the periphery of

Christian fear and hostility, partly because he did not have the same high profile as Aphrodite as an iconic deity with major temples and a prominent cult presence (Pl. *Smp.* 189C4–8, but compare Paus. 1.30.1, 3.26.5). The icons of Aphrodite were temple-housed, thereby eliciting the deeply instilled early Christian abhorrence of idolatry (2 *Clem.* 1: 6, Acts 17: 16). What's more, this forbidden idol in attractive female form was often scantily clad and at times completely nude, and this added a lurid intensity to the abhorrence, as will be seen below.

Prior to Christianity, the Greeks thought it neither possible nor desirable to eliminate her force and its effects. Hippolytos in Euripides' play is a rogue freak for trying to deny her powers and to remain sexually untouched, and he was ruthlessly punished by Aphrodite for his efforts. From this perspective, the idea that sexual copulation could ever be the anti-pleasurable toil that Julian classifies it as being would have seemed disingenuous, a false transfer of the difficulties of childbirth to sexual arousal and intercourse.

These popular Greek beliefs about Aphrodite made it problematic for Greek and strongly Hellenized Christians to reject Aphrodite without either renouncing sexual activity altogether, as encratite Christians like Tatian did, or without believing, as Clement and Julian did, that Christ saved Christians from being afflicted by Aphrodite—a state of salvation they retained only so long as they remained soberly goal-oriented toward reproduction when copulating. From this perspective, there was nothing sweet about the desire Aphrodite provoked universally in humans and animals, as there was for the Greeks. True life and immortality belonged to Christ the Lord, while God's wrath incarnate, sexual pleasure and eternal death, belonged to Aphrodite.

A deep fear and outright hostility toward Aphrodite thus ensued within the Greek and Hellenized sector of emergent orthodox Christianity. Eusebius (c. 260–340), for example, portrays Constantine as though the Roman emperor were determined to eradicate the most dangerous sites of other-theistic worship, just as the Israelite King Hezekiah did. Eusebius claims that Constantine demolished temples of Aphrodite in Heliopolis and in the more remote Aphaca in Lebanon (Euseb. *Vit. Const.* 3.55.1–5, 3.58.1–4). While it can be doubted whether Constantine actually did so (Cameron and Hall 1999, 303–5), it is beyond dispute that Eusebius, the first major church historian and Constantine's premier publicist, wanted Constantine to be like a Hezekiah against Aphrodite and extolled him for making an auspicious start in Aphaca and Heliopolis.

A major reason for Eusebius' hostility is that he was swayed by Paul's revisionist claim about apostate Israel and identified Aphrodite as the first demon worshipped by rebel pagans after they turned into

apostates from Christ the Lord. As Eusebius puts it, the first temple that they built in their apostasy was a “shadowy recess [*skotion muchon*] of the licentious demon [*akolastos daimōn*] Aphrodite” and was dedicated to foul defilements. Eusebius then throws to the winds both chronology and some of his credibility as a historian by locating this primordial temple of Aphrodite on top of the cavern in Jerusalem, where Christ was said to have been buried and to have risen from the dead—a cavern that the rebel pagans first wickedly concealed with mounds of backfill, or so Eusebius asserts (*Vit. Const.* 3.26.1–5). Hence Constantine's building of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher was, to his mind, another temple of Aphrodite torn down so that Christ's church could rise, and as such a serious blow for the demon and her outrageous pagan followers once its remains were covered over with the church edifice.

Eusebius was not alone in his fervid animosity against Aphrodite, and the damage done to her worship was not all in his mind. The archaeological findings at the Greco-Roman city of Aphrodisias (the city of Aphrodite) in Carian Asia Minor are real enough. There, at some point in late antiquity, the colossal marble statue of Aphrodite was bludgeoned on the face and arms, broken into large chunks “by pious Christian hands,” and then concealed as foundation filler in the building of an external wall (Erim 1986, 58–9, see too Pollini 2007). When the Taliban in 2001 destroyed the colossal sixth-century ce Buddhas of Bamiyan in Afghanistan, their stated motive was a generic stance against alien gods as idols. While early Christians partly shared this generic stance against alien gods, goddesses central to female religiosity, sexuality, and reproduction were especially targeted for reasons that generic hostility to alien gods and idolatry do not explain.

These attacks make sense, however, as a way to enforce bringing the women's domain of deity worship strictly to Christ alone, by demonizing and forcibly removing his strongest competition in that domain: Aphrodite and other deities of sex and fertility like her. Paul in Acts pioneers this agenda himself by trying to challenge the worship of Artemis of Ephesus, the many-breasted fertility goddess, where his mission proved premature and led to an uproar of defensive protest in the city: the citizens as a whole were chanting “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians,” and Paul was lucky to leave the city unscathed (*Acts* 19: 23–40, see Oster 1976). Again, this incident need not have happened as narrated, in order for us to see the same ideology at work that Eusebius later supports: to facilitate total conversion, go after the goddesses of sexuality and their sacred sites first. Once the women and the girls are brought or driven into the fold, religiously alien worship diminishes of its own accord, through dedicated child rearing in Christ.

Athanasius (c. 296–373) likewise finds Aphrodite highly problematic for having instigated the sexually fornicating mores (*Contra gentes* 10, cf. 26) by which Greek polytheism was sustained, and he forthrightly declares that he considers the Greek “women gods” more intolerable than the Greek male gods (Gaca 2007). From this ecclesiastical viewpoint, Aphrodite was not a nude or semi-nude deity using her arms, hands, and garments to play sensuous peek-a-boo and thereby to suggest interconnections between female allure and sexually grounded spirituality, as she was in Greek and Hellenized society, where she was even the Roman Emperor Augustus' divine foremother. No, she was a “whore” (*pornē*) in the raw who “shamelessly bared the unseeable parts of her body for all to view,” as Cyril of Alexandria (d. 444) puts it (*In duodecim prophetas*, ed. Pusey 1868, vol. 1: 111).

In this guise, the “naked so-called goddess” (*hē nomizomenē thea gumnē*) was a blazing emblem of the religiously dangerous and seductive “female” (*thēleia*) who “provokes pleasure and trips up males into apostasy from God” (*paroxunei tēn hēdonēn, skandalizei tous arrhenas aphistasthai theou*), as declared by a follower of Athanasius (*On the Deception of the Devil* = *De fallacia diaboli* 5). He accordingly urges his listeners to stop bowing down to this naked woman god in reverence (*proskunein*), and he joyously celebrates each Christian conversion as a victory over this practice: “Let us not stop giving thanks ...for the one who yesterday was bowing down to a naked woman now professes belief in God! (8, 10, *mē pausōmetha eucharistountes ...ho chthes proskunōn gunaika gumnēn nun homologeī theon*).”

Further, as Gregory Nazianzen (c. 329–89) asserts, Aphrodite, “shamelessly a whore” (*pornē aischrōs*), was “one who services shameful unions” (*gamōn aischrōn hypēretis*) that would best be termed “whorish initiations” (*pornika mustēria*) (*Orationes*, 5: *Contra Iulianum*, in Migne, *PG* 35, pp. 704–5; *Orationes*, 35: *In sancta lumina*, in Migne, *PG* 36, p. 337). These “shameful unions” and “whorish initiations” condemned by Gregory were mainly traditional non-Christian Greek weddings, practices that dated far back and were still being celebrated in late antiquity, as John Chrysostom (c. 347–407) also notes with strong disapproval. In his day in Antioch, non-Christian Greek families were still going at it, dancing and singing hymns for Aphrodite at their daughters' weddings. Chrysostom protests this religious outrage: the hymns teem with shameful sexual contents that are not even “religiously appropriate [*themis*] for reputable slaves [*spoudaia andrapoda*] to hear,” let alone for the virgin in her bridal procession. Her father and mother hitherto protected their daughter from anything to do with debauchery, only to waste this upbringing by

subjecting her to it on her wedding day, thereby making her shamelessly corrupted from then on (John Chrysostom, *Propter fornicarios*, in Migne, PG 51, p. 211). Thus Aphrodite's role in traditional Greek weddings was central to the obscene "prostitution" ring she is said to have run (Budin 2008, 260–86), at least as far as the church fathers were concerned.

This is not to suggest that Christians in late antiquity uniformly concurred with the early church demonizing of Aphrodite. The sixth-century Christian rhetor Choricus of Gaza, for example, still sees fit to celebrate Aphrodite as "the god" (*hē theos*), calls red roses "the blood of Aphrodite," and associates these flowers with her immanent presence ("roses make me think of Aphrodite") (16.1.2, 16.1.7), just as the Hellenistic female poet Nonnis did centuries earlier: "The one whom Kypris does not love, she [*tēna*] does not know what sort of flowers roses are" (AP 5.170). But Choricus' syncretistic adoration was at odds with the smear campaign against Aphrodite among Christian bishops and their circles, including all the powers-that-be discussed above: Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea; Athanasius, on-again off-again bishop of Alexandria, and his supporters, Cyril, bishop of Alexandria, John Chrysostom, bishop of Antioch, and Gregory Nazianzen, the Cappadocian church father and son of a bishop of Nazianzus. In authoritative unison, the church fathers urged their congregations, new converts, and imperial leaders to cast Aphrodite down and to praise the Lord for this accomplishment; for, as they knew from their own experience and from that of the Prophets and Paul, religious social order historically ran to a great extent by the theological ideas and religious sexual rites that mothers learned in their youth and imparted to their daughters and sons. Speaking as an example of Greek religious upbringing, Plato (429–347 bce), for example, was serious in stating that "one ought to beget children, for it is our duty to leave behind, for the divine power, people to worship it" (*Laws* 773E5–4A1). In heeding this advice, Plato's citizens of Magnesia would be paying their required but restrained homage to the compelling force of their mistress (*despoina*) Aphrodite (*Laws* 841A9–B2), just as the Greeks historically did. "Heaven forbid," or perhaps even *anathema estō*, even the most dedicated of Christian Platonists would say to these convictions of Plato. To prepare the way of Christ alone required begetting children strictly for him, and for that Aphrodite especially needed to be driven from the sexual and regenerative center of Greek and Hellenized culture, wife by wife, mother by mother, generation by generation.

The God Eros and the Question of Homoeroticism in Early Christianity

Eros, in addition to being far less publicly visible as a temple-housed icon than Aphrodite, stayed on the periphery of the main sexual danger emphasized in early Christianity due to his strong association with male pederastic homoeroticism in antiquity (see Lear, and also Leita 233–35, in this volume). Present Christian trends in homophobia lean heavily on Leviticus 18: 22 and Romans 1: 26–7, yet it remains debated whether, and if so, when and to what extent a socially normative Christian intolerance against sexually active homoeroticism develops and draws on these Levitical and Pauline passages for support (Brooten 1996, 215–302, Martin in Kuefler 2006, 130–51). Further, Boswell's thesis is that male homoeroticism finds an accepted place, or at least a niche, in the emergent Catholic church (Boswell 1980; see Kuefler 2006). Whatever the early Christian views may have been on homoeroticism, male and female alike, one point is clear: practices of sexual and life-sharing relations between persons of the same sex were not the main sexual danger denounced in early Christianity, for, apart from Romans 1: 26–7, the reiterated and strenuously voiced public policy agenda from the New Testament onward through late antiquity is against sexual fornication. This sexual conduct, as noted above, is specific to female–male copulating or to physically heterosexual relations, and it is practiced partly with a view to procreating offspring in religiously alien and generally marital ways (Gaca 2003, 124). Insofar as this religiosity was historically goddess-oriented in the main, Aphrodite came under a direct and aggressive early Christian intolerance, given her leading role in human sexuality as the Greek and Hellenized analogue to the Queen of Heaven. Eros as a god of male homoerotic pederasty fell outside of this determined focus on routing the fornicating customs of marriage and reproduction in Gentile lands in order to replace them with the missionary position in Christ the Lord.

The heterosexual and largely marital specificity of the Christian anti-fornication stance has a very important implication for future research on the question of homoeroticism in Christianity, early on and over the course of time. As Masterson rightly indicates, Christian same-sex life sharing among peers and younger initiates certainly was strongly promoted and practiced among monks (Masterson in Kuefler 2006, 215–35), where the main rule was for men and male initiates to renounce sexual relations with women, but not necessarily with each

other. The converse emphasis on renouncing sexual relations with men holds true as well for virginal Christian nuns and younger female initiates—marry Christ in spirit, but leave ordinary men and the toils of motherhood behind. Thus Boswell's idea is well worth even more sustained inquiry into whether Christian males in monasteries and Christian females in convents engaged in a sexually active homoerotic intimacy over time, as these groups established themselves and developed into their eventual orders of priesthoods, brotherhoods, and sisterhoods. It certainly would not have been fornication for them to do so, which means there was no barrier on that major count. Perhaps homoeroticism of a sort became a relatively safe haven and an alternative in response to Christian anti-fornication alarmism? And, if so, was it all sublimated? This seems unlikely. Yet, as shown above, sexual arousal of any kind, or at least outside of Christian marital procreation, may well have remained absolutely off limits, as erotic possession by Aphrodite. Nonetheless, Boswell's thesis is a major step toward starting to pry open whether or not homoerotic sexual arousal and activity were off limits in the Christian priesthoods and sisterhoods, and this research endeavor should continue.

Conclusion

In retrospect, Paul's revolutionary adaptation of the testamental pact to worship the Lord alone has had an extraordinary impact on Greek culture, western civilization, and more globally. Every church wedding and baptismal ceremony reaffirm his endeavor to stop Greeks and other Gentiles from rebelliously serving Aphrodite and other deities and to bring them back to Christ the Lord, as an act of putative restoration. But Aphrodite did not go away quietly, for Christian sexual repression still lingers in her wake, like the wreckage of Hippolytos: at least among the laity, Christians should engage in no sex at all, or they should engage only, as the antithesis of her pleasurable works, in the hard labor of procreative (and hence strictly heterosexual) copulation within Christian marriage. As a result, continuing now as a Christian legacy, homoerotic sexual relations still seem deviant from many a congregational perspective, where the only authentic marriage is heterosexual, non-marital sexual activity is wrong, contraception in Catholic heterosexual marriage seems wrong, and overt sexual hedonism seems shameful because sedate reproductive intercourse was elevated in the early church as the people's one and only way to sexually worship the one and only Christian Lord.

Guide to Further Reading

Early Christian sexuality, a complex and wide-ranging topic, is explored in several accessibly written books of central importance: see Brooten 1996 on early Christian receptions to female homoeroticism; Brown 2008 for a history of heterosexual practices of Christian sexual renunciation in the patristic period; and Gaca 2003 for the potent mix of Greek philosophical and biblical sexual principles that were selectively used to shape both the repressive and the more permissive early Christian marital and procreative norms.

The history of male homoeroticism in early Christianity as a whole (emergent orthodox and other trajectories) still awaits a definitive major study. The pioneering Boswell 1980 is a groundbreaking work on male homoeroticism in the early church, but some of its findings have been disputed. The essays in Kuefler 2006, along with the bibliography therein, should now be consulted along with Boswell 1980. Krondorf 2009 is also a valuable reader to consult for the construction of masculinity, homoeroticism, and other aspects of male sexuality in Christianity and Judaism. The argument in Harper 2013, 141–58 about Christian Roman imperial antipathy to male homoeroticism is admittedly unsettling but persuasive.

The new Introduction in Brown 2008 contains a 20-year retrospective survey of additional studies on early Christian sexuality, such as Cooper 1996, which space constraints prevent mentioning in full here. Most recent is Part I in Kamitsuka 2010, but see also Dunning 2011. Harper 2011 and 2013, 12 are overly secular, and anachronistically so, in their diffuse sense of fornication (*porneia*).

A number of the ideas presented in this chapter take their start from Gaca 2003 and 2007, but these are reconsidered anew from the historical perspective of Greek theology and on the basis of substantially new primary source research into the church fathers and other patristic writers of late antiquity. The section on Eros and homoeroticism is also new. All translations of Greek are my own. Hebrew Bible translations are from the New English Bible or are my modifications thereof.

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Chapter 34

The Early Modern Erotic Imagination

Alastair J. L. Blanshard

Introduction

In 1694 the translator Peter Motteux faced the difficult challenge of rendering the *Pantagrueline Prognostication* into English. This strange, spoof-astrological sixteenth-century text was to be one of the final elements in his attempt to complete Thomas Urquhart's monumental translation of Rabelais' *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. Urquhart had already successfully translated Books 1 and 2 before his death. Motteux's task was to translate the remaining books, along with the Rabelaisian minor works (of which the *Prognostication* was one). Among the many translation difficulties that the *Prognostication* posed was its frequent use of colloquial slang for sexual activity. Motteux not only rose to the challenge; he surpassed the original in the variety and color of his language. In the section on "those who are influenced by Venus," the original text of the *Prognostication* lists seventeen types of illicit lovers. Motteux tops this by transforming this list into a catalogue of over 100 terms. Among items on this list of "pepper'd, clapt and pox'd Dabblers" one finds "twiggers" (meaning "the overly promiscuous"), "hedge-whores" ("a cheap prostitute"), "mutton-broakers" ("a chaser of prostitutes"), "cullies" ("a person duped in love"), "bellibumpers," and "fricatrices" ("women that gratify through rubbing").

This excessive outpouring of terminology typifies the abundant range of sexual activity that can be observed in the early modern period. It also neatly underlines the challenge of working on the erotic in this timeframe. Not only are the meanings of many of these words

obscure, but they also map awkwardly onto modern categories of sexual activity or identity. Motteux's catalogue of types of lovers draws distinctions where modern sexuality draws none and regards as crucial elements that we regard as trivial or inconsequential. How does one distinguish, for example, between an "ingle," a "he-whore," a "huffler," and a "bardash"? All are types of sodomites, but their precise characteristics remain opaque. Sometimes Motteux's contemporaries use the terms interchangeably. At other times they seem to be drawing important distinctions that nevertheless remain difficult to pin down. Motteux's list reminds us that his was a world with a very different sexual landscape, in which much was in flux. The other reason why Motteux's translation provides a good starting point for a discussion of the relationship between classical and early modern sexualities is that, among the many influences on Motteux's work, we can see the distinct traces of the classical past.

The *Prognostication* is itself a parody of texts that often were steeped in classical knowledge. Not only were classical astrological texts the foundation for Renaissance astrology, but early modern works on astrology were also an important vehicle for the transmission of myths and stories from antiquity. In explaining the various constellations, early modern astrological texts acted as compendia of classical literature. So a discussion of Cancer might associate the crab in the stars with one that supposedly harried Hercules as he battled the Hydra; or, alternatively, a discussion of Sagittarius almost inevitably brought forth a recounting of the various myths involving centaurs. The story of Ganymede regularly appeared either in discussion of the constellation of Aquarius (with whom the boy was associated) or in discussion of the constellation of Aquila, the eagle. The *Prognostication* expected its readers to be fully conversant with such classical material. For example, in the preface of the *Prognostication* the author claims that he has consulted not only all the standard works on astrology, but also Empedocles himself on matters of the moon. This reference to the Greek Presocratic philosopher Empedocles and his expertise in lunar affairs alludes to a passage in Lucian's *Icaromenippus* that reports that, when Empedocles famously leapt into the crater of Mt. Aetna, he was blown by a gust of smoke up to the moon, where he continued to live on air and dew (Lucian, *Icaromenippus* 13–14). It is an obscure reference, one only accessible to those deeply familiar with classical literature. Yet the *Prognostication's* classicism is more than just ornamental: the work also uses classical exemplars to help explicate contemporary issues. Thus, among the various types of sodomites listed, we find references to those who are called "Ganymede." Here the classical allusion is used to convey much about this breed of sodomite. It gives him a pedigree as well as a

sensibility; bound up in the term is his sexual role (passive), his age (young), and his relationship status (kept rather than hired). The allusion does a lot of work. The *Prognostication* neatly demonstrates that it is practically impossible to avoid encountering the classical past when reading any early modern text where sex is involved. The classical world is embedded in the fabric of such discussion.

The art, literature, and philosophy of the Greco-Roman world served a number of functions in discussions of sex in this period. The greatest contribution made by classical culture was to provide a matrix by which the plentiful and rich sexual discourse of the period could be ordered and analyzed. It supplied a vocabulary for the expression of desire. It made strange or difficult concepts more explicable. It opened alternative ways of viewing relationships. It told you about bodies—how they felt, looked, and loved. It fuelled pornographic fantasy.

Sex, Sin, and the Classical Text

In his programmatic text on education, *De ratione studii* (“Upon the Right Method of Learning,” 1511), the famous sixteenth-century humanist scholar Desiderius Erasmus (1469–1536) confronted the problem of teaching pagan works in a Christian world. He based his discussion on “the worst line—from a Christian point of view—in the entire Virgilian corpus” (Grafton 1991, 38): the opening line of Virgil’s second eclogue. This poem begins with the image of the shepherd Corydon burning with desire for the pretty boy Alexis. For Erasmus and his readers, the danger posed by such texts was clear. Classical literature seemed to offer an open endorsement of the sin of sodomy. Indeed the name “Alexis” often operated as a codeword for “sodomite” (Puff 2003, 218 n. 129). For example, one of the charges of impiety alleged against the English poet and playwright Marlowe (1564–1593) was that he declared that St. John was Christ’s “Alexis” (Bray 1995, 63–5). The licentiousness of the pagan past was a constant topic among moralists in the early modern period. Preachers used examples of the depravities of emperors to remind their flocks of the dangers of temptations of the flesh. The various rapes of Jupiter were used to demonstrate the immorality of non-Christian religions.

Particularly worrying to Christian moralists was the sin of sodomy, which they perceived as a vice extremely prevalent among the ancients. The crime of sodomy included not only anal penetration (occasionally called “true sodomy”); it grew to embrace all non-reproductive sexual activity such as oral sex, mutual masturbation,

clitoral stimulation, and penetrative acts performed by the clitoris. Sodomites could be both men and woman, although the vast majority of our surviving legal cases involve men.

In order to avoid any suggestion that he was teaching sodomy, Erasmus took comfort from Paul's *Letter to Titus* 1: 15 ("To the pure, all things are pure") and suggested that the teacher of Virgil should focus on the broader significance of the poem. The true subject of this poem, according to Erasmus, was friendship and, more importantly, the poem could be used to teach the lesson that friendship could only be built upon similarity. In this way the peasant (*rusticus*) Corydon's complaints that Alexis, the sophisticated city boy (*urbanus*), refuses his love could be transformed into a moral tale about the impossibility of friendship across classes. The subversive potential of the poem was drained in favor of a reading that made it reaffirm the social order.

Erasmus' shift toward a broader moralistic reading of Virgil represents one of the typical critical moves adopted by humanists as they wrestled with the confronting morality and sexual content of classical texts. Others preferred to ignore any problems and chose only to focus on the linguistic content of the texts, worrying themselves about rhetorical style or etymologies of individual words rather than their troubling usage. Thus a scholar might express surprise that *cunnus* is a masculine noun and *mentula* a feminine one, but he would take it no further than that. Metaphorical and allegorical readings abounded. So Hermann von der Beeke (d. 1520) suggested that Corydon stood as a cipher for Virgil, and his profession of love for Alexis was a metaphor for his admiration for Augustus (Puff 2003, 71). Ovid proved particularly susceptible to allegorical readings. Continuing a tradition begun in the medieval period, translators and commentators offered readings of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* that interpreted the text as a series of fables sympathetic to Christianity: a pagan companion to the gospels. In this way Ovid was turned into a useful handbook for teachers and preachers (Moss 1982, 32). Stories such as Zeus' abduction of Ganymede (Ov. *Met.* 10.155–61) or Orpheus' pederasty (10.81–5) were recast in a language of divine love and grace.

The extent to which humanists were successful in their attempt to rescue classical texts from opprobrium remains debatable. At the very least, they managed to lift them into a separate erotic register. Thus the Council of Trent (1545–63), while banning all books that "avowedly teach lascivious and obscene matters," made an exception for classical erotica, on the grounds of the "elegance" of its language (Schroeder 1941, 547–8). Nevertheless there were plenty of people who claimed to be able to see through the exegetical practices of the humanists. The figure of the depraved humanist who used his classical

learning as a disguise for his perverted desires quickly became a stock character in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In fact one of the earliest references to the word “humanists” occurs in a poem that berates them for being infected with the sodomitic vice (Barkan 1991, 67–8). Humanists are regularly depicted seducing their students (both male and female) with lines borrowed from ancient texts. Part of the reason for this state of suspicion against humanist learning was the sheer volume of classical and classicizing erotic material compiled by humanists that circulated in the early modern period.

Antonio Beccadelli's *The Hermaphrodite* of 1424 provides a useful example. Dedicated to Cosimo de' Medici the Elder (1389–1464) and condemned by Pope Eugenius IV (1383–1447), this collection of verse would prove an erotic classic. Its notoriety ensured its circulation in manuscript and, although a full printed text was not produced until 1790, it was regularly excerpted, summarized, and cited by later authors. In the early nineteenth century Friedrich Karl Forberg (1770–1848) published an edition of the work and an appendix on the meaning and classical sources of the verse. This appendix, published as the “Apophoreta” (“Party Favors”—an allusion to Martial, Book 14), would become one of the foundational works for modern sexology (Blanshard 2010, 48–55). As Forberg discovered, *The Hermaphrodite* is densely packed with classical allusions. When, at the start of the work, Beccadelli warns off married women and virgins from his work, he does so with imagery taken straight out of Martial. Alongside Martial, poets such as Ovid, Juvenal, Propertius, and the *Priapeia* provide models and inspiration for Beccadelli's verse. The collection is most infamous for its verses on the topic of sodomy, but it also contains verse on topics such as the size of a woman's clitoris, the joys of adultery, and the use of Catullus in the seduction of a mistress. The work includes supposed anecdotes about the sex lives of the ancients. For example, in one notorious poem, Beccadelli records that Paris used to assist the maintenance of his erection while penetrating Helen by sticking a finger up his anus (*Hermaphrodite* 1.22).

The example of *The Hermaphrodite* can be paralleled by a number of other texts. Throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth century, sex was discussed, represented, and celebrated, either in translations of erotic works from antiquity or in erotic verse that looked to classical models. This tradition of classically inspired erotic texts can be traced forward into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Increasingly over this period, the celebratory aspect of such work gives way to a more didactic focus. Classical material was assembled and marshalled to teach how sexual acts should be performed and to enumerate the number of sexual pleasures that awaited the adventurous reader. Nicholas Chorier's *Satyra Sotadica de arcanis Amoris et Veneris* (“A

Sotadic Satire on the Secrets of Love and Venus”) is a typical example. This neo-Latin prose dialogue was published in the 1660s under a double pseudonym via false attributions of translation to Jan van Meurs (Meursius) and of authorship to Aloisia Sigae. Through its popularity, this dialogue “has probably done more to constitute the *discours de la sexualité* than any other early modern text” (Turner 2003, 166). It circulated in numerous copies and was quickly translated into three modern languages. The *Satyra Sotadica* was the handbook that taught the 9-year-old Casanova everything he needed to know about sex. The work takes the form of a series of dialogues between two women, Tullia and Octavia. In the course of their conversation, they discuss the nature of male and female genitals, a range of increasingly complex sexual postures, and the conduct and joys of extramarital relations. From the work's title, with its allusion to the Hellenistic poet Sotades, who enjoyed a reputation for pornographic verse, we can see that this was a work that signaled a strong affiliation with the ancient past. Throughout the dialogues, numerous classical sources are quoted and parodied. Tales about the sexual activities of historical figures (Messalina, Sappho, Socrates) are recounted or invented.

Also worthy of mention among the titles on the list of “educations in the schools of love” is Antonio Rocco's *L'Alcibiade fanciullo a scola* (manuscript: c. 1630, printed text: 1651). Like the *Satyra Sotadica*, this text also took dialogue form. In this case, it was a dialogue between the beautiful young Alcibiades and his older schoolmaster, Philotime. In a parody of supposed humanistic learning, Philotime seduces Alcibiades and introduces him to the joys of homosexual sodomy. Sex with boys is presented as constantly trumping sex with women. Female bodies are shown to be disgusting; the boy's anus, by contrast, is delightful. The dialogue even reverses the traditional assumption that sodomy is unnatural by proffering the example of lions and dolphins as boy lovers; the example relies on the story of Arion being rescued by a dolphin (Hdt. 1.24). This dialogue parodies earlier texts. Not only is it parasitic on the genre of Platonic dialogues, but it also alludes to erotic dialogues from the imperial period. Dialogues that pitted the love of boys and the love of women begin in antiquity with texts such as Plutarch, *Amatorius* (*Erotic Dialogue*, c. 96–115 ce) and the Pseudo-Lucianic *Amores* (c. third century cd) and continue into the medieval period with texts such as the *Altercatio Ganymedis et Helene* (“Debate between Ganymede and Helen”).

Time and again, we see that, when the mechanics of sex and seduction need to be explicated, more often than not the model is drawn from classical precedents. Just as the classical world provided humanists with an education in architecture, art, astrology,

mathematics, medicine, and philosophy, so too did it provide a model of sex education. Armed with a paraphrase of Ovid, a few seductive lines from Catullus, and some salty conversational gambits from Martial, the early modern lover was ready for action.

The Birth of Greek Love

The ancient world not only taught you how to copulate with bodies; it also told you how to love them. Arguably one of the most important developments in the history of modern sexuality was the development in this period of the notion of an intense eroticized friendship between men that was predicated on classical models. “Greek love,” as it came to be called, was a passionate desire that found expression in the arguments and tropes of Greek poetry and philosophy. In this it sought to distinguish itself from the discourse surrounding the act of sodomy. Here love stood apart from the act. “Greek lovers” were accused of committing sodomy, and some even confessed to the act; but sodomy was neither the aim nor the vehicle by which male-to-male love was expressed. Affection and desire were foregrounded; physical expression of that desire was certainly secondary or inconsequential. Importantly, “Greek love,” unlike the discourse of sodomy, created an identity to which men felt they could subscribe. Few men openly and happily embraced the identity of the “sodomite” (the artist Giovanni Antonio Bazzi, 1477–1549, otherwise known as “Il Sodoma,” seems to be the notable exception), but the “Greek lover” represented something different. In giving breadth and depth to same-sex attraction, the discourse of “Greek love” would create a construct whose influence would be felt well into the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It would become one of the important streams in the development of the “modern homosexual.”

If “Greek love” has a birth date, then it occurs with the arrival of Gemistus Pletho (George Gemistos, 1355–1452) in Florence in 1438. Pletho had accompanied the Byzantine Emperor John VIII Palaeologos to Italy for the Councils of Ferrara–Florence (1438–9). While in Florence, Pletho offered a series of lectures on Plato and Platonic philosophy. The response seems to have been electric. One contemporary observer describes people as “enslaved to Plato.” It must be remembered that, for most of the medieval period, the majority of Plato's texts had not been read or studied in the West. The texts that had survived were partial or unintelligible translations. It was not until the arrival of a complete manuscript of Plato from Byzantium in 1423 that Plato began to be read again.

However, Plato did not arrive into Renaissance Italy without opposition. Pletho and his followers had enemies, and these adversaries were only too keen to attack Pletho through his adherence to Plato. So we see Plato under sustained attack for promoting paganism, promiscuity, and depravity. Among the many charges that were leveled against Plato was the allegation that he promoted sodomy in texts such as the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*. The response to this was to argue that, far from advocating sodomy, Plato actually condemned it. Drawing on the Platonic distinction between two types of love, scholars argued that Plato endorsed a form of love between men that was “honest, modest, demure, loyal, holy, blessed, a safeguard of chastity and continence, generously inspiring the soul and loving and obedient to virtue” (Bessarion, *In calumniatorem Platonis*, 1469: 4.2). Here scholars stressed that Plato offered a new vision of male affection, one that offered to rewrite much of fifteenth-century understanding about the ancient world. In place of an ancient world given over to sodomy, it offered an alternative of philosophic initiates striving to escape sodomitic temptation in favor of metaphysical enlightenment.

This version of “Greek love” receives its most complete elaboration in the work of Marsilio Ficino (1433–99). There Ficino explains how “Greek love” is a species of divine love. This love is spiritual, abstract, almost impossible to comprehend. The influence of this alternative vision of male affection spread wide. It bolstered the allegorical interpretations of Greek myth. We can see its reflection in the passage of Erasmus' *De ratione studii* discussed earlier, where he suggests that Corydon's desire for Alexis should be glossed as “friendship.” When the English poet Richard Barnfield (1574–1620) was criticized for the homoerotic flavor of his *The Affectionate Shepheard: “Containing the Complaint of Daphnis for the Love of Ganymede”* (1594), he mounted a defence couched in the language of “Greek love” and its classical precedents.

The idea of “Greek love” had important consequences in the visual arts. Donatello's *David* (c. 1430–2; [Figure 34.1](#)) had helped reintroduce the desirable naked male form into European art. Previously nudity, with its associations of Christ on the cross or the naked sinner in Hell, had been something designed to elicit pity. By reaching back to classical precedents of heroic nudity, Donatello began to reconfigure the associations of the naked body. His *David* is somebody to admire and emulate, not to pity. Fuelling this re-appreciation of the classical male form was the rediscovery of a large number of classical sculptures in Rome. The recovery of works such as the Apollo Belvedere in 1479 had an immediate impact on the artistic scene. Drawings and engravings of the statue spread quickly as far as

England and the Netherlands. It was only a short step from admiring bodies to falling in love with them.

Figure 34.1 Donatello, *David*.

Source: Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence. Scala / Art Resource, NY.



Discussion of the deployment of classical bodies within eroticized contexts in Renaissance art inevitably involves discussion of the profusion of Ganymede imagery found in this period. Ganymede can be found in such diverse places as the bronze doors of St Peter's in

Rome (Filarete, c. 1433–45), the villa of a papal treasurer (Baldassare Peruzzi's fresco for the Villa Farnesina, 1510–11), and the ceilings and gardens of ducal palaces (e.g. Giulio Romano's stucco relief in the Palazzo Ducale Mantua, 1536–7, or Lorenzi Battista's sculptural group in the Boboli gardens, c. 1565–76). It would be a mistake to read every reference to or image of Ganymede as eroticized. Allegorical meanings of the imagery were well established, and these often served to remove any erotic associations. Ganymede was a popular figure in emblem books such as Alicati's 1531 *Emblemata*, which stressed the metaphorical use of the figure. George Withers's (1588–1667) poetic explanation of the figure for another series of influential emblems, by Gabriel Rollenhagen, conveys the spirit of these allegorical connotations. As accompaniment to an illustration of Ganymede, Withers appends the following explanation of the image:

By *Gaymed*, the *Soule* is understood,
That's washed in the *Purifying flood*
Of sacred *Baptisme* (which doth make her seeme
Both pure and beautifull, in *God's* esteeme.)
The *Aegle*, meanes that Heav'nly *Contemplation*,
Which, after Washings of *Regeneration*,
Lifts up the *Minde*, from things that earthly bee,
To view those *Objects*, which *Faith's* Eyes doe see.
The *Nectar*, which is filled out, and given
To all the blest *Inhabitants of Heaven*,
Are those *Delights*, which (*Christ* hath sayd) they have,
When some *Repentant soule* beginnes to leave
Her foulness; by renewing of her *birth*,
And, slighting all the *Pleasures* of the Earth.

(G. Withers, *A Collection of Emblemes, Ancient and Moderne Quickened
vvith Metricall Illustrations*, 1634)

Yet, despite (or perhaps as a result of) these chaste readings, there are a number of cases where the erotic charge of the Ganymede story is allowed to play out. The most obvious case would seem to be the drawing of Ganymede given by Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475–1564) to Tommaso de'Cavalieri (1509–87). Michelangelo's devotion to the younger Roman nobleman is well attested. Numerous sonnets are dedicated to him, and the biographer Vasari reports that Michelangelo consented to draw a portrait of him, a rare honor that he reserved for figures of “infinite beauty.” The drawing of Ganymede was given to Cavalieri during his convalescence following a serious illness in 1532. Along with the image of Ganymede ([Figure 34.2](#)), Michelangelo sent an accompanying image of Tityus, the giant who was punished for his attempted rape of Leto by having his liver consumed by a vulture

(Figure 34.3).

Figure 34.2 Michaelangelo, *Ganymede*.

Source: Windsor, Royal Library, no. 13036. Supplied by Royal Collection Trust / © HM Queen Elizabeth II 2012.



Figure 34.3 Michelangelo, *Tityus*.

Source: Windsor, Royal Library, no. 12771r. Supplied by Royal Collection Trust / © HM Queen Elizabeth II 2012.



It is within the frame of “Greek love” that these images make most sense. As a young man, Michelangelo had been at the Medici court and associated with Marsilio Ficino, and the impact of this exposure to

Florentine Neoplatonism can be seen in his writings. The images work as a pair of statements on the nature of love. Here we have a Neoplatonic allegory about the duality of love. The eagle represents the power of divine love to elevate, while the vulture represents the power of base love to injure and consume. In their role as gifts of love and affection from an older man to a younger man, these classical images resonate with feeling (Saslow 1986, 17–51).

This ability of classical images to speak to personal desire is also reflected in another Renaissance Ganymede. In 1545, Benvenuto Cellini (1500–71) returned from the court of Francis I to work for Cosimo I de' Medici (1519–74). One of his projects at the Medici court was the restoration of an antique torso. This torso Cellini restored—through the addition of a head, limbs, and an accompanying eagle—as Ganymede (Figure 34.4). Despite Ganymede's status as an emblem of the power of Christian baptism, in the hands of Cellini this image was quickly interpreted as a statement of sodomitic desire. Cellini was twice convicted of the crime of sodomy, once in 1523 and once in 1557. He was also accused of the crime by one of his male models. Cellini was certainly aware of his reputation as a sodomite. When he was imprisoned in 1556 for assault, he wrote a sonnet in which he remarked how the world mistakenly thought him convicted “on Ganymede's account” (Saslow 1986, 151). It is no wonder, then, that, in a dispute following Cellini's proposal to restore the torso as Ganymede, the sculptor Baccio Bandinelli told Cellini to “be quiet, you dirty sodomite.” Cellini's retort is surprising for its candor about the erotic associations of the Ganymede story:

You madman, you're going too far: But I wish to God I did know how to indulge in such a noble practice; after all, we read that Jove enjoyed it with Ganymede in paradise, and here on earth it is the practice of the greatest emperors and the greatest kings of the world. I'm an insignificant man, I haven't the means or the knowledge to meddle in such a marvelous matter. (Cellini, *Vita* 2.70–1, trans. Bull)

Figure 34.4 Cellini, *Ganymede and Eagle*.

Source: Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence, no. 403. Scala / Art Resource, NY.



Cellini's response lacks the abstract refinement of Neoplatonic philosophy, but it demonstrates the same desire to reconfigure the crime of sodomy away from the notion of sin. In his equation of sodomy with power, nobility, and learning, he finds congruence with other developments in homoerotic discourse.

The development of a language of love between men continued into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. At almost every step, classical models prove inspirational. Greek poetry proved particularly attractive in this regard. Unlike stories about the loves of gods, stories

about the loves of Greek poets provided real historical precedents for same-sex attraction. At the same time, their verse offered a vocabulary in which this attraction could be expressed. The poet Anacreon is a good example. Seventeenth-century editions and translations of Anacreon are not coy about Anacreon's love of beautiful boys. In a 1683 translation of Anacreon, the poet is described as "much enslaved with the Masculin Love of a Beautiful Boy named Bathyllus." Later in the biography of Anacreon, we find an account of his love for the even more beautiful Cleoboulus, a boy "so strangely beautiful, that Nature seemd extravagant in bestowing all her charms upon his face." Given such associations, it was only natural that, when poets sought to express their homoerotic feelings, they turned to Anacreon. The "Anacreontiques" of Charles Goodall (1671–89) are typical in this regard. In his second ode, Goodall adopts the persona of a dove that carries love notes between Anacreon and Bathyllus. The poem celebrates the beauty of the boy and the love between the poet and his muse. The popularity of such poetry is confirmed by parody. In 1685 Samuel Wesley (1662–1735) wrote "An Anacreontique on a Pair of Breeches." The poem begins with the image of Anacreon lying beside the beautiful "Bathillus" before descending into a farcical high drama lament about the anguish of repairing one's trousers.

In the visual arts we can find a similar collocation of desire, antiquity, and homoeroticism. The figure who did most to promote this formation was the "father of art history," Joachim Winckelmann (1717–68). Winckelmann was born in Germany but spent most of his working life in Rome, eventually becoming a papal antiquary in 1763. Winckelmann's sensibilities were resolutely homoerotic. He writes breathlessly about the chest of the Apollo Belvedere and the coiled muscles of the Farnese torso. He was particularly devoted to the image of Antinous (Vout 2006). Yet, through his writings, especially his monumental *Geschichte der Kunst Altertums* (*History of the Art of Antiquity*, 1764), Winckelmann molded European taste. Winckelmann's endorsement of the male nude as the highest form of art was responsible for it retaining its central position in the tradition of history painting.

Due to Winckelmann's work, it became the highest artistic achievement to populate one's work with desirable, nude, classicizing male figures. The art of the eighteenth century is littered with pictures of naked Roman generals and Greek heroes. Of course, these images were not designed to speak to homosexual desire. Instead they were supposed to inspire their viewer. Yet, as we have already seen, the line between admiration and desire is blurry. Works such as Girodet-Trioson's *Sleeping Endymion* (1791; see [Figure 34.5](#)) proved equally susceptible to transgressive homoerotic readings and to normative

ones (Davis 1994).

Figure 34.5 Girodet, *The Sleep of Endymion*.

Source: Louvre 4935. © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY.



While many works clearly exemplify Roman civic virtues or expressions of martial valor, it is hard not to read more coded messages in others. The iconographic programme behind Frederick the Great's (1712–86) Temple of Friendship at Sanssouci is a case in point. Frederick's homosexual leanings are well attested. He famously declared that in his state “he granted freedom of conscience and cock” (Steakley 1988, 166). Throughout his reign, rumors were rife about his homosexual trysts. Such biographical details inevitably color our interpretation of the medallions depicting the famous male “friends” from Greek antiquity that adorn the Temple of Friendship. Once again, the language of friendship seems to be slipping into a homoerotic realm.

It is these experiments in the creation of a homoerotic sensibility predicated on Greek models that perpetuated the language of “Greek love” from the Renaissance through the Enlightenment and into the start of the nineteenth century. The novelist and playwright Heinrich von Kleist (1777–1811) is following a long tradition when he writes to the Prussian officer Ernst von Pfuel: “you have created the age of Greece in my heart, my whole soul embrace you ... I have often observed your beautiful body with girlish feelings ... All the law-

giving of Lycurgus becomes clear to me through the feelings that you have inspired" (letter to Ernst von Pfuel, January 17 1805, ed. Streller). It is sentiments such as this one that fuelled the outpouring of "Greek love" that we find in both the Romantic and Uranian movements of the nineteenth century.

Tribads, Sapphics, and Female Desire

In the second dialogue of the *Satyra Sotadica* (c. 1660), Tullia continues her erotic education of Octavia, as they lie naked in bed together. Here she recounts how Italian, French, and Spanish women are wont to make love to each other using a method that they borrowed from the ancients. By rubbing themselves against each other, they brought themselves to a climax. According to Tullia, this art was supposedly introduced to the Greeks by Philaenis, and it was a system used frequently on Lesbos, most famously by Sappho, whose female lovers Andromeda, Athis, Anactoria, Mnais, and Girino would inflame her loins with their friction. Indeed, citing Aristophanes (*Lysistrata* 108–9), Tullia remarks that the women of Miletus went even further, fashioning dildoes to satisfy themselves.

In her account of these activities on Miletus and Lesbos, Tullia projects onto the ancient world the seventeenth-century figure of the tribad, the woman who likes to stimulate or penetrate female sexual partners. The figure is known from classical sources, but she receives increased attention in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Fuelling this revival of the figure of the tribad is the renewed interest in the clitoris in medical circles and increased legal concern about the female sodomite, especially in France and Germany. In both countries we see cases of women prosecuted for sodomy and burned (France) or drowned (Germany) for penetrating other women by means of strap-on dildoes. Meanwhile gynecological texts attempted to find a biological cause for such female aberration. In almost all cases, tribadism could be attributed to an enlarged clitoris. So, for example, Isbrand van Diemerbroeck in *The Anatomy of Human Bodies* of 1694, in the chapter on "Parts of the Womb," reports:

Sometimes it happens, that contrary to the common Course of Nature, this part [sc. the clitoris] grows out much more in length like the Yard of a Man, so that Women have made an ill use of it, by copulating with others of their own Sex, hence called Confricatrices,

but anciently Tribades. Thus Platerus asserts that he saw a womans Clitoris, equalling in length and thickness the Neck of a Goose. Riolanus and Schenklius have observed it as long as a Mans little Finger. Regner de Graef saw a Girl new Born, whose Clitoris had such a Resemblance to a Mans Yard, that the Midwife and the rest of the women there present, took it for a Boy; and gave it a Mans Name in Baptism. Plempius writes of one Helena, that lay with several Women and vitiated several Virgins with that Part. I myself in a certain woman at Montfort saw a Clitoris as long and thick as the ordinary Yard of a Man, which happened to grow to that extent, after she had lain in three or four times. (Isbrand van Diemberbroeck, *The Anatomy of Human Bodies*, 1694: 1.26.44, p. 183)

Similar sentiments about the dangers of the large clitoris are expressed in Helkiah Crooke's 1615 *Mikrokosmographia: A Description of the Body of Man*, an account that also includes a warning about the dangers of stimulating the clitoris with tight clothing.

The figure of the tribad crosses into a number of other genres. In ethnographic accounts of Turkey and North Africa, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century writers deploy this figure when attempting to explain foreign or unusual customs. Pierre d'Avity (1573–1635) recalls the ancient tribad when he attempts to explain the various types of native priests one encounters on the Barbary Coast. Here, he declares, one can find a group of women who claim to conjure up spirits and, under the cover of their religion, abuse pretty women by rubbing their genitals. Indeed this fraud is so well known among women that some even feign sickness so as to be abused in this way (P. d'Avity, *The Estates, Empires, & Principallities of the World*, 1615: 1128). Likewise, when he attempts to explain the female custom of bathing in Turkish baths, Nicolas de Nicolay (1517–83) conjures up the appeal of tribadism. So fervently do these women fall in love with each other that they grapple and fondle each other's bodies just “as in times past weer the Tribades, of the number wherof was Sapho the Lesbia [who] transferred the loue wherwith she pursued a 100 women or maidens vpon her only friend Phaon” (N. de Nicolay, *The Nauigations, Peregrinations and Voyages, Made into Turkie*, 1585: 60, trans. T. Washington).

Nicholas Chorier, the author of the *Satyra Sotadica*, clearly intended his writings on female sexuality to be taken as a serious reflection of female desire. By choosing to place the work under the name of a female poet and linguist, Aloisa Sigea (1522–60), Chorier wanted not only to continue a trope about female expertise in sexual matters, but also to lend some authenticity to his account of female pleasure. Yet it is worth remembering that, for all its exclusively female dialogue and supposed female authorship, this work remains

one written by a man for a male audience. Finding an authentic woman's voice speaking about female same-sex desire prior to the late eighteenth century is a difficult task.

All too often, discussions of female same-sex activity occur as part of a misogynist campaign of denigration leveled against powerful women. The tribad stands as an emblem of nature disordered. She is the woman who goes too far. In violating other women, she violates the conventions of her society.

The construction of the sex life of Marie-Antoinette (1755–93) allows us to see this terror and its political deployment in action. Rumor and accusations about the behavior of the queen had begun almost immediately after her husband Louis XVI began his reign in 1774. In 1775 the queen wrote to her mother, the Empress Marie Theresa, that her enemies “have been liberal enough to accuse me of having a taste for both women and lovers” (Castle 2003, 215). The main vehicle through which the queen's erotic encounters were discussed consisted in the numerous political pamphlets devoted to French court life that were published in France, England, and the Netherlands. She is the subject of more pamphlets than any other contemporary figure. Her erotic adventures form the subject matter of over 126 separate pamphlets, and the most famous of them circulated in large numbers, of up to 30,000 copies (Hunt 2003, 128).

According to the pamphlets, the queen's desires observed no distinctions. Marie-Antoinette would leave a female lover for the embrace of a man, only to leave him in turn for another woman. The queen was depicted at the center of a circle of Parisian tribades (Colwill 2003). The English diarist Hester Piozzi summarizes contemporary propaganda when she observes: “The queen of France is at the Head of a Set of Monsters call'd by each other *Sapphists*, who boast her example; and deserve to be thrown with the He Demons that haunt each other likewise, into Mount Vesuvius” (*Thraliana* 2.740). This notion of Sappho reincarnated as modern tribad can be paralleled in other texts from this period. We find similar accusations made against the leading actress Mademoiselle Raucourt, whose life was pilloried in works such as *Anandrina, ou Confessions de Mademoiselle Sapho* (published in 1789). Again, tribadism and lesbian love pass under the sign of Sappho in this text, which describes, among other incidents, the erotic initiation of a woman into a private club called “La Loge de Lesbos” (“The Lodge of Lesbos”) (Figure 34.6).

Figure 34.6 Initiation scene from *La Nouvelle Sapho* (1789).

Source: British Library.



*Belle présidente et vous chères
compagnes, voici une postulante.*

she arrived to it with a reputation for excessive desire. Her passionate, suicidal love for the fisherman Phaon, known principally through Ovid, made her emblematic of the dangerous overabundance of female passion. Her romanticism could be celebrated in works such as Madeleine de Scudéry's *Histoire de Sapho* (*The Story of Sappho*, 1656), in which the poet lives a life of seeming hedonism on the island of Lesbos, devoting herself to diverse pleasures until she finally encounters the beautiful and talented Phaon. Scudéry's *Histoire* was immensely popular, providing inspiration for works such as Houdar de la Motte's opera-ballet in celebration of love, *Le Triomphe des arts* (1700; see Cowart 2008, 174–8).

Yet, as we have seen, it was easy for this kind of romanticism to be problematized and denigrated. Such activity was not limited to France. We find a similar invective use of Sappho across the channel, in Britain. The wealthy artist and novelist Anne Conway Damer (1749–1828) was subjected to abuse in the anonymous pamphlet *A Sapphick Epistle, from Jack Cavendish, to the Honorable and most beautiful Mrs D-R* (c. 1782). Here Damer's close female friendships and her interest in Latin and Greek combined to make her an ideal target for Sapphic parody.

Among all these male travesties of female love, we occasionally get glimpses of female sensibilities. Just as men could mould Platonic philosophy into a language of legitimate same-sex attraction, so too could women utilize the prestige and versatility of classical iconography to substantiate their position and express the nature of their desires. The iconography deployed by Queen Christina (1626–89) in the Palazzo Riario would seem to provide just such an example.

Christina became queen-elect of Sweden at the age of 6, after the death of her father, King Gustavus II Adolphus, at the Battle of Lützen. Following her accession to the throne in 1644, she proved herself a capable ruler, most notably through her prominent role in negotiations over the Peace of Westphalia that put an end to the Thirty Years War. Along with a talent for politics, she demonstrated a refined artistic sensibility, eventually being dubbed the “Minerva of the North” for her support of the arts. Europe was scandalized in 1654, when Christina, who had been raised a Protestant, converted to Catholicism and abdicated her throne. After abdication she moved to Rome and lived most of her life in the Palazzo Riario. Although political intrigue would occasionally promote her as a candidate for the thrones of Naples and Poland, she seems to have preferred a life centered in Rome.

Throughout her life Christina was a complicated figure, who constantly challenged standard gender expectations. She had a number of close intimate friendships with women, most notably Ebba

Sparre. She regularly dressed as a man, and in her autobiography she thanked God for “not letting any of the defects of my own sex be inherent in my soul, which You in mercy have made altogether male, just as the rest of my being.”

Within the elaborate game of transgressive self-representation that Christina conducted, the artistic iconography of the Palazzo Riario plays an important part. Two figures dominate the iconographic programme: Alexander the Great and the goddess Athena. Both are regularly twinned with the queen, to make her self-identification with them more certain. Christina's affinity with Alexander was such that she even penned a series of reflections on his life and actions. The work, originally published in French, was quickly translated into a number of other European languages and proved a minor hit in intellectual circles. If Alexander represented the kind of man that Christina wished she'd been born, then Athena represented the woman she hoped she could be. It is easy to understand the appeal of Athena. She is the virgin goddess. Clothed in armor, she never takes a husband. On her breast she wears the Gorgon's head, so that any man who looks at her turns into stone. Other images also make the same point about gender reversal. For example, one of the more spectacular pieces in the queen's collection was a painting by Rubens of Omphale and Hercules. The painting relates to an episode in the Hercules myth cycle when the hero, in order to atone for a murder he has committed, has been sold into slavery to Queen Omphale. The queen deprives him of his lion skin cloak and of his club and forces him to wear women's clothes. She in turn adopts the costume of the hero. It is a story about man brought down low and the transgressive power and desire of women. It was an image well suited to the home of Queen Christina (Biermann 2001).

Guide to Further Reading

Accessible introductions to issues of classical sexuality in this period are provided by Blanshard 2010, 124–42 and Crompton 2003. Grafton 1991, 23–46 offers an excellent introduction to the moral dilemmas that humanist scholars faced in their readings of ancient texts. The crime of sodomy is well treated in the study of Puff 2003, and the collection edited by Gerard and Hekma 1989 is a good starting point for further readings on the topic. A new edition and translation of Antonio Beccadelli's *The Hermaphrodite* has been produced by Holt Parker 2010, as part of the I Tatti Renaissance Library. The best discussion of the *Satyra Sotadica* and *L'Alcibiade fanaticulo a scola* is

Turner 2003. The complicated authorship of the *Satyra Sotadica* means that it circulates under a number of different titles (e.g. *The Dialogues of Aloisia Sigea*, *The Delights of Venus*, from *Meursius*, and *A Dialogue between a Married Lady and a Maid*). On the topic of “Greek love,” Dall’Orto 1989 surveys a number of important figures. The most comprehensive collection of material relating to the impact of classical sculpture on the artists of the Renaissance is Bober and Rubinstein 1986. On the figure of Ganymede in the Renaissance, see Saslow 1986. For the life, career, and writings of Winckelmann, see Potts 1994. On Winckelmann’s homosexuality, see also Aldrich 1993 and Davis 1996. For the reception of Sappho, Reynolds 2001 and 2003 provide a good introduction. See also Andreadis 2001 and the collection of essays in Greene 1996. There is a translation and edition of Scudéry’s *Histoire de Sapho* by Newman (Scudéry 2003).

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Chapter 35

Romantic Appropriations

Michael Matthew Kaylor

Few statements are culturally more pertinent for the nineteenth century than the last line of “An Invocation,” from William Johnson’s 1858 *Ionica*: “Two minds shall flow together, the English and the Greek” (Cory 1905, 23–5, l. 30). As the century progressed, both general and educated opinion, spurred by impassioned appeals from thinkers such as John Stuart Mill and Matthew Arnold, increasingly saw “Grecian grandeur” as the proper cornerstone of both personal and formal education. This was especially true for those who had been taught at Eton by the likes of William Johnson (later Cory) and Oscar Browning and/or at Oxford by Benjamin Jowett, Master of Balliol College, Regius Professor of Greek, and author of *The Dialogues of Plato Translated into English with Analyses and Introductions* (published in 1871–5). Through the tutelage, example, and machinations of Jowett and others, those who studied *Literae Humaniores* (or “Greats”) were uniquely poised to influence the Victorian and Edwardian periods, and from among them arose figures of cultural renown, such as Walter Horatio Pater, John Addington Symonds, Gerard Manley Hopkins, and Oscar Fingal O’Flahertie Wills Wilde, or of political and historical renown, such as George Nathaniel, Lord Curzon, who became viceroy of India (see Dowling 1994, 72).

Few in the British Empire anticipated that what Arnold had dubbed in 1869 “this wonderful significance of the Greeks” (2011, 23) would also foster the darker aspect to which Arthur Christopher Benson, the period biographer of Johnson and Pater, alludes in his diary:

But if we give boys Greek books to read and hold up the Greek spirit and the Greek life as a model, it is very difficult to slice out one portion, which was a perfectly normal part of Greek life, and to say that it is abominable etc. etc.

That “one portion”—the range of desires subsumed under “Greek love”—would increasingly prove problematic, for “the uncritical allusions to homoeroticism in the Greek texts read in *Literae Humaniores* would have introduced Oxford undergraduates to the possibility of a culture in which a mode of sexuality prohibited in their own society was tolerated and even encouraged” (Shuter 1994, 492). Those dynamics are most elaborately considered in Linda Dowling's *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford* (Dowling 1994), which explores the lingering influence that *Literae Humaniores* had on undergraduates such as Pater:

To uncover the full homoerotic implicativeness of Pater's writing ... would be to reveal the way in which Pater accepts the transcendent Plato of the Greats curriculum [at Oxford] but does so on thoroughly “critical” or historicist terms, allowing his readers to see that the pederastic dimension to Plato's thought is no mere figure of speech, as Jowett had been wont to maintain, but instead a constitutive element of that thought, and thus of the Western tradition itself. (Dowling 1994, 95)

While Victorian classicists commonly treated “Athenian pederasty as a ‘figure of speech’ for the educational process” (Younger 1997, 147), Pater challenged this in *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* (first published in 1873 and followed by later editions), *Marius the Epicurean: His Sensations and Ideas* (published in 1885), and *Greek Studies* (published in 1894/5)—works that constituted an apologia for what, in his Oxford lectures published in 1893 as *Plato and Platonism* (Pater 1912), he defined as

the clean, youthful friendship, “passing even the love of woman,” which ...elaborated into a kind of art, became an elementary part of [Hellenic] education. The beloved and the lover, side by side through their long days of eager labour, and above all on the battlefield, became respectively, *aïtes*, the hearer, and *eispnelos*, the inspirer; the elder inspiring the younger with his own strength and noble taste in things. (Pater 1912, 231–2)

Couched in biblical quotation, classical precision, and personal sentiment, such passages also served to inspire the Uranian movement—a cluster of pederastic writers and artists active in England from roughly 1858 to 1930 (see d'Arch Smith 1970, Kaylor 2006, and 2010, Davis 2011), whose swansong was the three-volume *A Defence of Uranian Love* (1928–30), written by the period's greatest collector of classical antiquities, Edward Perry Warren (Warren 2009). The passage above, from *Plato and Platonism*, would become, in Warren's hands, yet another appropriation of Phaidros' question from Plato's

For what could be better for a boy on the edge of manhood than to have a good lover, a man to show him the way, or what better for the lover than to have a boy?

Warren's rendering reads:

Truly no greater good could befall him than a worthy lover, a lover to reassure him, to tolerate his boyish imbecilities, to show him where he is right, where wrong, where weak, where wise, a lover to train and tend him, to console him and fortify him, to gratify his longings, and to shout to him at football. (Warren 2009, 21)

"To shout to him at football" dangerously answers Phaidros' question, appropriating in a culturally inappropriate way desires more easily brushed aside as figurative in Plato or tacitly prurient in Pater, and making them disturbingly modern. This Uranian progression from the philosophy of Plato to the prurience of Pater to the contemporary concerns of Warren is what the present chapter will chart, which requires venturing back to one of its influences.

As much as they inspired young Goethe, the figure and writings of the German archaeologist and art historian Johann Joachim Winckelmann inspired Walter Pater with a "strength and noble taste in things," both of which had tactile features, as Pater admits in "Winckelmann" (Pater 1980), the longest study in his *Renaissance* volume:

That [Winckelmann's] affinity with Hellenism was not merely intellectual, that the subtler threads of temperament were inwoven in it, is proved by his romantic, fervent friendships with young men. He has known, he says, many young men more beautiful than Guido [Reni]'s archangel. These friendships [brought] him into contact with the pride of human form ...(Pater 1980, 152)

Especially because of the intrusive "he says," Pater suggests that Winckelmann "has known ...many young men," has "known" them in the sodomitical sense of Genesis 19. This supposition, which Pater derived entirely from Winckelmann's prose (see Morrison 1999, 124), nonetheless accords with an account, then unpublished, from the *Memoirs* of Giacomo Casanova, who "claims to have entered Winckelmann's study in Rome in December 1760 and discovered him in a sexual encounter with a young boy [*un jeune garçon*]" (Bonfiglio 1998, 141). According to Casanova, Winckelmann gave him the following explanation:

You know I am not only not a pederast, but for all of my life I have said it is inconceivable that such a taste can have so seduced the human race. If I say this after what you have just witnessed, you

will think me a hypocrite. But this is the way it is: During my long studies I have come to admire and then to adore the ancients who, as you know, were almost all buggerers without concealing it, and many of them immortalize the handsome objects of their tenderness in their poems, not to speak of superb monuments ... I found myself, at least as far as my love life was concerned, as unworthy of esteem, and not being able to overcome this conceit by cold theory, I decided to illumine myself through practice Thus determined, it has been three or four years that I have been working at this business, choosing the cutest Smerdiases of Rome. (Translated in Sweet 1988, 149–50)

Since it required little more than bedding boys as exquisite as the Thracian lad acquired by Polykrates and lauded by the poet Anacreon, this “to illumine myself through practice” was a justification that Casanova considered specious at best, though one can imagine Pater making a similar claim when, in 1874, Benjamin Jowett and others at Oxford learned of a series of romantic letters and kisses he had exchanged with William Money Hardinge, an undergraduate at Balliol College (see Inman 1991, Shuter 1994). However, save for that lapse, Pater proved far more elusive than Winckelmann in this regard—which was also true for most of the Uranians (see Kaylor 2011b)—and only in his writings does pederastic and homoerotic suggestiveness abound, as Denis Donoghue (1995) relates in *Walter Pater: Lover of Strange Souls*: “[Pater] chose to write about Winckelmann rather than about himself, while enjoying the warmth of homosexual motifs” (42).

However, Winckelmann *had* “enjoyed the warmth,” and in a more encompassing fashion than Pater would, becoming one of those who, like August von Platen, inspired the homoerotic travels and expatriations chronicled in Robert Aldrich's *The Seduction of the Mediterranean: Writing, Art and Homosexual Fantasy* (Aldrich 1993). Regarding Winckelmann, who moved to Italy in 1756 and became papal antiquary and *scriptor linguae teutonicae* at the Vatican in 1763, Aldrich writes:

What is significant in the case of Winckelmann, and the type of homosexual he represents, is that he could find the means and the place to pursue his urges and that he could find aesthetic arguments through which to justify or sublimate them. Here lies the connection between the modern Mediterranean and the classics. (Aldrich 1993, 48)

While this move facilitated Winckelmann's access to Graeco-Roman artifacts from the Vatican's collections and from the ongoing excavations at Paestum and Pompeii—providing ample material indeed for his monumental 1764 *History of Classical Art*—it also

brought him, as Pater suggests, “into contact with the pride of human form” in ways that were neither sculptural nor pictorial. However, this physical contact was ever influenced by his intimacy with those ancient artifacts (see Parker 1992, 540), for “Greek sculpture deals almost exclusively with youth, where the moulding of the bodily organs is still as if suspended between growth and completion” (Pater 1980, 174).

Scholars today rightly scoff at Sir Richard Francis Burton's assertion, made in “Terminal Essay, § IV, Social Condition” (an appendix to his 10-volume *The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night*, published in 1885–8): “I hold [pederasty] to be geographical and climatic” and flourishing within a “Sotadic Zone,” “bounded westwards by the northern shores of the Mediterranean ...[and] including meridional France, the Iberian Peninsula, Italy and Greece, with the coast-regions of Africa from Morocco to Egypt” (reprinted in Kaylor 2010, 1: 161). Nevertheless, Burton's belief was, in various manifestations, not uncommon. Even Winckelmann had observed that

The lower portion of Italy enjoys a softer climate than any other part of it ...[and] brings forth men of superb and vigorously designed forms, which appear to have been made, as it were, for the purposes of sculpture. The large stature of the inhabitants of this section [of Italy] must be apparent to everyone; and the fine development and robustness of their frames may be most easily seen in the half-naked sailors, fishermen, and others whose occupation is by the sea. (Translated in Rose 1986, 7)

Such perceptions and preferences—evinced as a burgeoning fascination with Sicilian boys—were shared by a range of English writers, from Romantics such as William Thomas Beckford and George Gordon, Lord Byron, to Edwardians such as Frederick William Rolfe, “Baron Corvo,” and George Norman Douglas. This was a preference that, as the century progressed, expanded beyond the Mediterranean via photography—particularly after legions of young Italians had posed naked in the studios of Wilhelm von Gloeden, a minor German aristocrat living in Taormina, where he photographed the local Sicilian boys, and of Wilhelm von Plüschow, his relative, who resided mostly in Rome. Such photographs provided “a source of titillation and exchange for the pederastically inclined” (Kaylor 2011b, 170), especially after the former's photographs had been popularized for a wider English audience by Joseph William Gleeson White's essay “The Nude in Photography: With Some Studies Taken in the Open Air,” published anonymously in June 1893 in *The Studio: An Illustrated Magazine of Fine and Applied Art*, and then by White's four-part series “On Photographing the Nude,” published under his own name in

March–June 1894 in the magazine *The Photogram*.

Occasionally the Uranians questioned this preference for Mediterranean boys, as Edwin Emmanuel Bradford does in “Boy Love,” from his 1918 collection *The New Chivalry and Other Poems*:

Is Boy-Love Greek? Far off across the seas
The warm desire of Southern men may be:
But passion freshened by a Northern breeze
Gains in male vigour and in purity.
Our yearning tenderness for boys like these
Has more in it of Christ than Socrates.

(Reprinted in Kaylor 2010, 1: 102, ll. 13–8)

Based solely on the above, Bradford would seem unimpressed by those Mediterranean allures that had inspired Edmund Gosse to confess to J. A. Symonds on New Year's Eve 1889, after receiving one such photograph from Symonds as a Christmas gift: “As I sat in the Choir [of Westminster Abbey during Robert Browning's funeral], with George Meredith at my side, I peeped at it again and again” (quoted in Thwaite 1984, 323). For the Uranians, desire sometimes proved stronger than discretion, and the nearby English choristers no rival for a Sicilian boy in a photograph. Even Bradford was forced to admit, as he does in the title-piece of *In Quest of Love and Other Poems* (published in 1914):

Beauty too common to remark
Gleams everywhere—one form I see
Whene'er I think of Italy.
A lovely youth who by our barque
Lay naked in the azure sea
Before a score of ardent eyes
That watched him gently sink and rise
In the Blue Grotto at Capri.

(Reprinted in Kaylor 2010, 1: 79–101, ll. 353–60)

“The Bather in the Blue Grotto at Capri,” written four years later, reveals the poet further moved by what had drawn the capricious Tiberius to Capri for pederastic orgies that would be imitated by Bradford's wealthier contemporaries, particularly the German industrialist Friedrich Alfred Krupp and the French dilettante and writer Jacques d'Adelswärd-Fersen:

Prepared to dive, he flings aside his vest,
And waits the signal. Brown's his curly hair,
Deep brown his eyes, and now we see it bare,

Though face and hands are browner than the rest,
Save two brown nipples on his boyish breast,
His sun-burnt body's nut brown everywhere.
He stands a moment, lit up by the glare
Of light reflected, grave and self-possessed.
Then down he drops deep in the deep-blue wave ...

(Reprinted in Kaylor 2010, 1: 105, ll. 1–9)

“Nut brown everywhere” is the physical feature that provided Gleeson White, in the abovementioned essay “The Nude in Photography,” with an ingenious aesthetic rationale for this Uranian fetish:

Civilised peoples, especially the Latin races, have accepted the superlative beauty of the human form as one of the chief elements in the classic ideal of art. Out of doors, it is obviously more a part of the landscape than figures in costume could be, since it is evident that Nature, the greatest artist, designed human beings, in common with animals, to harmonise with other natural objects. Against this it may be urged that the skin of those accustomed to wear clothing has come to be what is practically an artificial colour, and that the nudity which offends does so often from this fact alone. It is a common thing to hear travellers say that the absence of clothing among coloured races passes almost unnoticed. In photographs we certainly find that the olive skins of Italy yield often a more pleasant picture than the dead white of the Anglo-Saxons. (Reprinted in Kaylor 2010, 2: 431–2)

Beyond their olive skin, “Sicilians were,” Aldrich suggests, “exotic enough to the English or Germans that their nudity might be considered ‘native’ behaviour exempt from the polite norms of northern Europe but not offensive” (1993, 149–50). Further, “the Latin races,” as the dub suggests, also provided an appreciable link to a sanctioned, romanticized antiquity where, for the Uranians at least, *all* Mediterranean boys frolicked in unabashed nakedness. By overlapping past and present—a Hellenic boy seen through a Sicilian now on the beach, or perhaps a Sicilian boy seen through an ancient Hellenic sculpture—these pederastic writers and artists found a novel stratagem for expressing “the Love that dare not speak its name.” This is but one of a dozen Uranian stratagems detailed in Timothy d’Arch Smith’s *Love in Earnest: Some Notes on the Lives and Writings of English “Uranian” Poets from 1889 to 1930* (d’Arch Smith 1970), in Donald Mader’s “The Greek Mirror: The Uranians and Their Use of Greece” (Mader 2005), in Michael Matthew Kaylor’s *Secreted Desires: The Major Uranians: Hopkins, Pater and Wilde* (Kaylor 2006), and in the introduction to his two-volume *Lad’s Love: An Anthology of Uranian*

Poetry and Prose (Kaylor 2010).

The double standard inherent in considering Mediterranean nakedness, whether ancient or modern, real or merely depicted, as permissible while simultaneously considering Anglo-Saxon nakedness as scandalous bespoke an English disingenuousness often chided by the Uranians, as in “A Modern Ganymede” from the 1923 collection *Rondeaux of Boyhood* by “A. Newman”—perhaps the pseudonym of the Uranian publisher Francis Edwin Murray. Regarding his 12-year-old beloved Norman, the poet observes:

“Fair Ganymede” I called the lad
Whose beauty daily made me glad.
“What, gammy-knee’d?” the boy replied,
“You bought my flannel bags too wide
On purpose, then?” (His slang is sad.)
To serve his wine Zeus never had
A fairer boy. With limbs unclad
He proudly stood, but was his pride
Fair, Ganymede?
Though clothes are but a modern fad,
You may not without clothing gad
About, so must *your* beauty hide,
But e’en if *beauty* be denied,
Love’s bread and wine I don’t think bad
Fare, Ganymede!

(Reprinted in Kaylor 2010, 2: 55)

Among the available Uranian stratagems, perhaps the safest involved directly appropriating a Graeco-Roman tale—as in “Ganymede” and “Endymion” from *Cyril and Lionel and Other Poems: A Volume of Sentimental Studies* (published in 1884), by Mark André Raffalovich, or in “Charmides” from *Poems* (published in 1881), by Oscar Wilde; or appropriating a historical figure—as in “The Lotos-Garland of Antinous” from *Many Moods: A Volume of Verse* (published in 1878), by J. A. Symonds. Similar stratagems involved translating a Graeco-Roman work, as with *The Greek Anthology: Epigrams from Anthologia Palatina XII* (1914), translated by “Sydney Oswald,” the composite pseudonym of Sydney Frederick McIllree Lomer and Lionel Evelyn Oswald Charlton; or creating a derivative work, such as “A Summer Day in Old Sicily” and “The Tomb of Diocles” from *Echoes from Theocritus, and Other Sonnets* (published in 1885), by Edward Cracroft Lefroy; or crafting a historical fiction, such as *Marius the Epicurean* (published in 1885), by Walter Pater. Such appropriations were common for homoerotic and pederastic writers, although by the early 1890s a more daring trend emerged, which involved (as

discussed above) merely situating a poem or a prose work, a painting or a photograph in a Mediterranean locale—as in “Sicilian Vespers” and “Under the Shadow of Etna” from *Foam* (published in 1893), by Reginald Baliol Brett, Viscount Esher; “To Two Friends: A Sicilian Octave” from *Musa consolatrix* (published in 1893), by Charles Edward Sayle; “To a Sicilian Boy” (published in 1893), by Theodore Wratislaw; and “In an Aegean Port” and “Sicilian Love-Song” from *Poems / Poèmes* (published in 1896), by Lord Alfred Bruce Douglas.

However, the most revealing works in this regard are *not* those that saw publication or public display. “On the whole, the Uranians found a range of respectable publishers who were willing, at the very least, to court public scandal on behalf of their suspect texts” (Kaylor 2010, 1: lx–xx), which was true for most of the works named in the present chapter. Whether approved, decried, or simply ignored, these works were not only allowed to circulate; sometimes they also garnered praise despite their content. This was equally true for the visual arts. In 1893 Frederic, Lord Leighton, president of the Royal Academy, completed *Hit!*, a painting that depicts a boy learning to shoot a bow—a painting that was admired despite its depiction of “ephebic education, with possible strong homoerotic elements” (Kestner 1995, 250). A year later, Henry Scott Tuke entered the pantheon of English art with *August Blue*, a masterful painting of nude boys bathing. This painting “was hailed as a great success when it was exhibited at the Royal Academy,” then “traveled the country on show” (Wallace 2008, 71); it was also accorded the highest of honors, that of being purchased for the nation through the Chantrey Bequest. Though both *Hit!* and *August Blue* appropriated the Graeco-Roman pederastic tradition, they nonetheless accorded, curiously, with Victorian propriety. Despite what their receptions might suggest about English disingenuousness, those paintings, as well as the multitude of “published” Uranian volumes, reveal less about the dangers of appropriating Graeco-Roman sexualities than do those that were suppressed, refused publication or sale, or officially labeled “obscene.”

“The long nineteenth century,” stretching from the Romantic period through the Edwardian, provided a number of telling examples. It was not until the posthumous publication of Percy Bysshe Shelley's *Essays, Letters from Abroad, Translations and Fragments* (Shelley 1845) that readers became privy to the following complaint, lofted in 1818, in *A Discourse on the Manners of the Antient Greeks Relative to the Subject of Love*:

There is no book which shows the Greeks precisely as they were; they seem all written for children, with the caution that no practice or sentiment, highly inconsistent with our present manners, should

be mentioned, lest those manners should receive outrage and violation. (Shelley 1845, 16–7)

Louis Crompton glosses this in *Byron and Greek Love: Homophobia in 19th-Century England*:

Shelley was to protest, when he came to write on the subject, that his contemporaries seemed to be engaged in a conspiracy to keep an important side of Greek life a secret from modern readers who could not read the original documents. (Crompton 1998, 87)

Conversely, Shelley sought to thwart this “conspiracy” by crafting a companion piece for *The Banquet* (published in 1818), his literal translation of Plato's *Symposium*. Despite being penned by a canonical English writer, this discourse did not appear in its entirety until it was printed, privately, in 100 copies in 1931, and, publicly, in James A. Notopoulos' *The Platonism of Shelley* in 1949. For more than a century, scholars had cringed at the prospect of publishing a consideration of pederasty that dared to “show the Greeks precisely as they were.” However, despite its delayed publication, Shelley's discourse fared exponentially better than the two-volume memoirs of his friend George Gordon, Lord Byron—memoirs that likely recounted the author's Mediterranean travels, enlivened by homoerotic dalliances and the time spent in occupied Greece, ever attended by the page boy Lukas Chalandrutsanos, who had entered his service at 15: “It was Lukas who was to be the center of Byron's emotional life during his last months in Greece” (Crompton 1998, 315). These volumes' content plagued Byron's executors until 17 May 1824, when, at the office of his publisher John Murray, the manuscript made the most egregious bonfire in modern literary history:

The manuscript memoirs Byron had entrusted to [Thomas] Moore were, after heated discussion among Byron's relations and closest friends, burned in the fireplace of 50 Albemarle Street, the very address from which so many of Byron's written words, published and non-published alike, had issued forth into the world. (Graham 2004, 41–2)

However, since “the sorts of evidence commonly used in the construction of an autobiography were dangerous for pederastic and homoerotic individuals to retain” (Kaylor 2011b, 141–2), few kept memoirs such as Byron's, the rare exception being the Uranian propagandist George Cecil Ives, who left behind 122 volumes of diaries now owned by the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin, diaries rendered safer by being “punctuated by sections of sometimes impenetrable numerical and alphabetic code” (Cook 2003, 144). This is not to suggest that the Uranians *never* provided autobiographical details; but when they did,

it was usually through forms of “alternative autobiography,” as explored by Kaylor (2011b) in “Uranian Autobiography: Newman's *Rondeaux of Boyhood* and Reid's *Apostate*.”

Apologias such as Shelley's remained problematic, which explains why their later equivalents were usually privately printed, and in very small runs. *A Problem in Greek Ethics* and *A Problem in Modern Ethics*, both by J. A. Symonds, were privately printed, in 1883 and in 1891, in only 10 and 50 copies respectively. *The Graeco-Roman View of Youth*, the pamphlet version of a lecture delivered by George Cecil Ives, was privately printed in 1926, for only limited circulation. *The Intersexes: A History of Similisexuality as a Problem in Social Life* by Xavier Mayne (the pseudonym of Edward Irenaeus Prime Stevenson), a volume that contains a chapter entitled “The Life and Diary of an Uranian Poet: August von Platen, 1796–1835,” was privately printed in 1908, in only 125 copies. A notable exception was *The Intermediate Sex: A Study of Some Transitional Types of Men and Women*, by Edward Carpenter, which surprisingly found two publishers, again in 1908. The limited printing of these apologias is curious, given that they are stolidly philosophical, historical, and/or anthropological (see Buckton 1998, 62), in contrast to the gushy Uranian poetry and fiction that was then being openly published and circulated.

The same was also true of “the premier apologia for pederasty in the language” (Kaylor 2011a, 2: 560), Edward Perry Warren's *A Defence of Uranian Love*, Volumes 1 and 3 of which were privately printed in 1928 in only 50 copies, as was Volume 2 in 1930—all printed under Warren's pseudonym “Arthur Lyon Raile.” As William Armstrong Percy III observes, Warren's *Defence* “apparently proved too shocking for his contemporaries. To this day, not one American public library counts Warren's title among the books in its collection” (Percy 1996, 9)—an observation that was true until Kaylor's scholarly edition, issued by Valancourt Books in 2009. What follows will treat that “premier apologia” as a microcosm of the issues already mentioned in the present chapter.

In *Edward Perry Warren: The Biography of a Connoisseur* (1941), Warren's commissioned biographers Osbert Burdett and E. H. Goddard relate that

After the turmoil and distress which had nearly overwhelmed him in 1910, the Magnum Opus [*A Defence of Uranian Love*], as it used always to be called, came to be a relief and a recreation to Warren. Some of the writing was done earlier, but the definitely Hellenic part was not begun until early in 1913 at Taormina, where Warren had gone for a six-months' holiday. (Burdett and Goddard 1941, 385)

Two years after acquiring his pederastic grail—the Roman silver scyphus dubbed *The Warren Cup* (first century ce) and purchased by the British Museum in 1999 for £1.8 million—Warren began composing “the definitely Hellenic part” of his *Defence*. While he pondered “this wonderful significance of the Greeks,” Warren “enjoyed the warmth” of the Mediterranean, within walking distance of von Gloeden's studio and its Sicilian boys, who ever inspired the pens and lusts of his fellow Uranians and with whom Warren could, for a price, “illumine himself through practice.” Clearly such sexual tourism had changed little in the century and a half since Winckelmann's death, though Warren hoped, through his *Defence*, to diminish the public antipathy toward the desires that fostered it. His life's mission, that of “a paederastic evangel,” had already influenced his furnishing of a spacious Georgian house in the High Street of Lewes, East Sussex (see Potvin 2011), his founding there of “the Lewes House Brotherhood” (see Green 1989 and Sox 1991), and his collecting practices in regard to Graeco-Roman antiquities for the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, acquisitions conducted with the assistance of his lover John Marshall and his other “Brothers” (see Burdett and Goddard 1941; Warren 2009, vii–cxiv). As Warren relates:

I puzzle too about love. It makes so much disturbance; people suffer from it; yet the good things of life come chiefly from it. Should I be content to remember only that something has been done for the Museums, content with the less personal result of love? For the Museum was truly a paederastic evangel. It must be counted a result of love.

(Warren, quoted in Burdett and Goddard 1941, 400)

However, nowhere is this “paederastic evangelism” more evident than in his *Defence*, the argument of which is encapsulated by his commissioned biographers:

Briefly, [Warren's] argument is that it is only Love, and consequently only a theory of Love, that makes life worth living. That which the author terms Grandeur, rooted on the earth, the Greek basis in the age of Pindar, is set against the Christian Sublime. The Greek “masculine” ideal with its derivatives—Aristocracy, Nobleness, the secondary position of women—is set against the Christian “feminine” ideal with its derivatives—Democracy, Purity, the equality of the sexes, which last, notably in America, has led to the predominance of women and the feminine virtues. (Burdett and Goddard 1941, 301)

More specifically, Warren constructs his “theory of Love” along pederastic lines, asserting that, for an ancient Greek lover,

on a basis sensual and erotic, was laid ...the corner-stone of a moral system which at least does not effeminately rest on the feminine, and is strong to guard his own powers. (Warren 2009, 47)

Never does Warren equivocate about the physical consummation that most problematized pederasty for both the ancients and the moderns:

It is, indeed, characteristic of Uranians, whether metaphorically or physically, that they are sensitive to touch and prone to touch: their touch has the peculiar gentleness, warmth, and firmness of sympathy. (Warren 2009, 50)

While many, like Daphnaeus in Plutarch's *Dialogue on Love* (*Amatorius*, second century ce) and Charikles in Pseudo-Lucian's *Amores* (fourth century), dismiss pederasty as inferior, partly because of its transience (see Foucault 1986, 187–227), Warren instead extols the ways in which this transience inspires and reveals the lover's nobler qualities:

But in boy-love there is a special *askēsis* [“discipline”] which fortifies the lover ...His loves may be many—many more than he wants. He takes the youth at a period of rapid development. Six months will show a difference. Absent six months, the boy will return to him no longer the same; and the six months lost can never be recovered. Sooner or later he will discover that the boy no longer finds complete satisfaction in his lover's arms The firm lines which the lover's training has developed in the boy's character and body become lines of separation. (Warren 2009, 68)

Such is the argumentative thrust, the stylistic handling, and the degree of appropriation of Graeco-Roman dynamics in *A Defence of Uranian Love*, a paean to pederasty even under current conditions, in which “Eros is the unknown god of obsolete desire” (Warren 2009, 306):

Now it would hardly be worth while to recall from the grave a form of love which had only a luxurious beauty, but we begin to see that, whatever colour love may give to our ideal of human conduct, whatever philosophical *Erōs* [“Love”] is to grow under the influence of the *Erōs paidikos* [“Boy love”], may be a needed increment of human perfection. (Warren 2009, 86)

In Warren's *Defence* (2009, 84–5), the paragraph that precedes the passage just quoted can serve as exemplary of the whole. It begins:

These comfortable words lift up our hearts. We at once see that we are dealing with something harder and sterner than in Shakespeare, and, to know what it was, we have to turn to Greek vases of the severe and pre-eminently paederastic period, for, though all were

under the ground in the days of Epaminondas and Anaxibius, they will tell us with clearness and precision much that was not lost by the age of Lysippos. At the highest our modern tide has not touched the heights of Greek love, and, if paederasty at all corresponding to the Greek is to recur, we may, with the culture now spread abroad, pass far beyond Shakespeare.

The “softer” pederastic love found in Shakespeare's *Sonnets* of 1609 is also contrasted unfavorably with the “harder and sterner” Greek love in Warren's novel *A Tale of Pausanian Love*, written in Naples in 1887:

From Shakespeare's sonnets you can see the bent of the English mind. It does not pass to the culture of strength, the beauty of the hero. We like heroes, we like strength. We do not associate them with beauty. And so our boy-love remains ever soft, and is usually sentimental or sensual. (Warren 1927, 36)

As one would expect from this connoisseur and collector of antiquities, Warren also asserts above that, “to know what [this ‘harder and sterner’ love] was, we have to turn to Greek vases of the severe and pre-eminently paederastic period,” which draws attention to his own role as “a paederastic evangel,” as one who has left behind a lasting legacy:

the ancient erotica acquired by Warren as an art dealer ...such as some of the phallic and homosexual vases now in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, which Warren represented overseas, and possibly the extraordinary Roman silver goblet whose unusual scene of anal sex between youths at a pederastic symposium has been extensively studied. Without Warren we would know much less than we do about homosexuality and classical art. (Davis 2001, 248)

The exemplary paragraph then associates this “harder and sterner” pederasty with all that was best in the ancient world and asserts that such a love could see a revival, if western culture were to “take a new and Hellenic turn”:

The evidence that this love has associated itself with comradeship in arms, with athletics, with the love of freedom, with philosophy, with all that was most Hellenic among the Hellenes, is sufficient to warrant the thought that, with the revival of naturalism among us, it could take a new and Hellenic turn, that it could “endure hardness.” It was with no softened *erōmenos* [“beloved”] that the Greek lover was occupied.

For Warren, Greek love and its “hardness” also merged work, sports, education, and festivities with aesthetics, inspiring those

perfections of sculpture and poetry that Winckelmann had first admired, then taught others to admire:

Constantly associated in field, palaestra, agora, and feast with all the best youths of the day, hearing them glorified in poetry for their deeds and temperance, for their will that found a way and yet brooked control; seeing their firm outlines and hard muscles immortalized in sculpture, and knowing the sweat and labour [*idrōs kai kamatoi*] which had preceded their victories, he was, from the beginning, occupied with the contemplation of *aretē andreia* ["manly excellence"]—the power and glory of the masculine.

The paragraph then expands Pater's claim that "Greek sculpture deals almost exclusively with youth," and it does so by asserting that Hellenic aesthetic, philosophical, and poetical works dealing with "youth" were not merely intended to praise "beauty for beauty's sake," but were also meant to inculcate and promote those masculine qualities the Greeks so prized, converting "a perfect manhood" into "a needed increment of human perfection":

Rather characteristically it was not to the sculptor, but to the sculptured that he turned, not to the praiser, but to the praised. And thus his love, dependent, no doubt, in general, on the continuance of the flower of youth, was associated far more generally with the severe effort after a perfect manhood. In Plato we find it engaged by beauty, whereas in Pindar no youth may conquer in a boxing-match but the heroes, his prototypes and models, march on to the scene.

The paragraph concludes: "And this is the golden age of boy-love"—an observation Warren held to be true for Hellenic Greece and hoped would someday be equally true, through his efforts and those of his Uranian fellows, for England and America. Through *A Defence of Uranian Love*, one of the last expressions of the Uranian movement, Warren clearly sought to actualize William Johnson's hope in *Ionica*, the first such expression: "Two minds shall flow together, the English and the Greek."

Besides Warren's *Defence*, a score of other Romantic, Victorian, and Edwardian works that appropriated Graeco-Roman homoeroticism also await examination by scholars, an apt example being *The Amazing Emperor Heliogabalus*, first published in 1911, by John Stuart Hay (Hay 1912): this is a study of the Roman Emperor Elagabalus, a boy of 14 who ruled Rome from 218 to 222 ce and whose decadence prompted the following scurrilous question from his Edwardian biographer:

By birth a Syrian, by profession High Priest of the Sun, whose devotees worshipped the Phallus as his symbol, was it likely that he, the chief exponent, should remain cold, should take no interest in

what was an all-absorbing topic? (Hay 2012, 193)

The Uranians would have been interested in this young worshipper of the phallus: he had been initiated into the eroticized priesthood of Cybele; he practiced a stylized group-sex that outrivaled Tiberius' exploits on Capri; he elevated men whose only distinction was the enormity of their genitalia; and he promoted what is today termed "gay marriage":

[Elagabalus] was already allied, by a species of matrimony, with the chariot driver Hierocles—calling himself wife and Empress—and that he was not attached to this man alone but to many others, for whom inquisition had been made throughout the Empire, on account of their looks and ability to satiate his mania more satisfactorily. (Hay 2012, 117)

After asserting that "Hadrian had deified, in Antinous, not a lad, but a lust" (2012, 194), Hay similarly contextualizes Elagabalus, with a delight that disgusted his contemporaries: "The one romance of this boy's life was with the fair-haired chariot-driver Hierocles" (199). As Kaylor relates in his introduction to Hay's *Heliogabalus*:

The phrasing here is pure Uranian apologia, inspiring the reviewer for *The Athenaeum* to assert that Hay "has taken a subject unsuitable for public discussion, and has produced a very striking vindication, or rather palliation, of the Roman Emperor whose name has hitherto been mentioned only as a symbol of sexual depravity." It would be equally true to assert that Hay "has taken a subject unsuitable for public discussion, and has produced a very striking vindication of Uranian love, whose name has hitherto been mentioned only as a symbol of sexual depravity," for it was "the Love that dare not speak its name." (Hay 2012, xxiii)

In "An Imperial Voluptuary," an anonymous review of Hay's *Heliogabalus* published in *The Academy and Literature* in August 1911, the reviewer asserts that "this curious book is an attempt to whitewash the blackened character of the foolish Sybarite boy Emperor" and then complains that "there is also a pruriency in writing of and revelling in things over which custom ...rightly draws a veil" (reprinted in Hay 2012, 421–3). From his opening sentence—"The life of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, generally known to the world as Heliogabalus, is as yet shrouded in impenetrable mystery" (Hay 2012, 3)—Hay dares to remove that veil from Elagabalus; however, the veil cast over Hay and his *Heliogabalus* remains barely lifted—"as yet." This is equally true for a score of other works in which such Graeco-Roman appropriations abound, works that await those who would dare to look.

Guide to Further Reading

Several recent studies explore the subject along similar lines; such are Robert Tobin 2000, Rosemary Barrow 2001, and John Lauritsen 2005. A number of vital primary materials have also been recently (re)issued, for instance Lesley Higgins 2006 and Peter Weiermair 2009. With regard to such Graeco-Roman appropriations by the Victorians, the following provides an apt introductory triptych: Lesley Higgins 1993; Gerald Monsman 2002; and William F. Shuter 2003.

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Chapter 36

The Early Homophile Movement in Germany

Hans Peter Obermayer

Organizational Framework: Magnus Hirschfeld, the *Scientific Humanitarian Committee*, and the *Sexual Intermediaries Annual*

In 1896, when the “Jewish socialist queer” physician Magnus Hirschfeld published “the first homosexual liberation manifesto” (Herzer 2001, 95), *Sappho and Sokrates*—subtitled *How Can We Explain the Love of Men and Women for Members of Their Own Sex?*—he used a pseudonym, “Th. Ramien,” on the advice of his publisher (Hirschfeld 1986, 50). The second edition (Hirschfeld 1902) appeared in his own name. Hirschfeld urged his gay readers themselves to help change the law. Throughout those six years between the two editions, his life had been exemplary. In 1897, with publisher Max Spohr, railroad employee Edward Berg, and author Franz Josef von Bülow, he founded at his home the Wissenschaftlich-humanitäres Komitee (Scientific Humanitarian Committee; hereinafter the Committee), whose first priority was the repeal of Paragraph 175 of the penal code, which criminalized all sexual acts between males. He also planned a homosexual research journal (Lehmstedt 2004). The first volume of the *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen* (*Sexual Intermediaries Annual*; hereinafter *JfsZ* or the *Jahrbuch*) appeared in 1899 in 2,000 copies, being edited “by the Committee”; the second volume named “Magnus Hirschfeld, M. D. of Charlottenburg” as editor. The *Jahrbuch* was

distributed to Committee members, physicians and lawyers, and men and women of sexual minorities (Keilson-Lauritz 2004, 17). As a work of “love thy neighbor” and scientific truth, the *Jahrbuch* had three purposes: Research and knowledge of “intermediaries, [or] hermaphrodites in the broadest sense of the word”; helping their more fortunate fellow men to a better understanding of those enduring “such deviations”; and, most importantly, eliminating the penal provisions that persisted in spite of the progress of scientific knowledge. “The persistence of these provisions is a stain on the aegis of German justice” (*JfsZ* 1 of 1899, 1–3 and Keilson-Lauritz 2004, 17).

Hirschfeld's intellectual honesty was shown by the fact that he first honored the real pioneer of sexology, Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, with a new edition of the latter's *Forschungen über das Räthsel der mannmännlichen Liebe* (Ulrichs 1994a), published in English as *The Riddle of Man-Manly Love* (Ulrichs 1994b). In the first volume of the *Jahrbuch*, Hirschfeld also published four previously unknown letters from Ulrichs to relatives, in which he came out as a Uranian in 1862, two years before the appearance of the first instalment of the *Forschungen*, and at the same time he let his relatives know about his publishing projects: he wanted his thoughts to be published in a monograph with a title like “The gender of Uranian hermaphrodites, i.e. androphilous androgynes.”²

If Hirschfeld was the “father” of sexology, Ulrichs was its grandfather. His was the first attempt to legitimize same-sex desire scientifically and historically, elaborating a complex terminological classification of sexual intermediaries. Ulrichs' terminology was based—remember that we are concerned with the period “Before Homosexuality”!—on Pausanias' speech describing the two forms of Aphrodite and her companion Eros in Plato's *Symposium* (180D–E):

One goddess of love is the motherless daughter of Uranus, whom we therefore call Urania. The other is the daughter of Zeus and Dione, whom we call the common Aphrodite. Likewise, too, the Eros who works with the latter is “common,” while the other Eros is Uranios [“celestial”] ...Urania does not have a female component, only a male component. So her Eros is the love of youths. Men who are inspired by this god will be drawn towards masculinity, towards what is stronger by nature. (Ulrichs 1994a, 4: *Prometheus*, p. 3)

Terms like *Urning*, *Uranian*, or *Uranism* designate same-sex love (homosexual orientation), while *Dioning*, *Dionean*, *Dionism* and the like refer to heterosexual desire; correspondingly bisexuals are *Uranodioning*, “dual-natured persons who desire both men and women” (Ulrichs 1994a, 1: *Formatrix*, p. 37).

In developing his theories, Ulrichs used a very modern

interdisciplinary approach, a mixture of personal reflection, empiricism, literary history, and medical and scientific studies:

After a long and careful period of self-reflection, careful observation of other Uranians, studying the ancient evidence on Greek and Roman Uranians, and finally after receiving very important information from a scientific authority concerning various medically documented cases of hermaphrodites, I now believe that I can demonstrate more readily, convincingly, and cogently than before, or at least show it to be highly probable, that Uranism is innate ... insofar as the Uranian harbors a deeply rooted *female nature* already in his mother's womb ...A Uranian is a kind of “man-woman,” Uranism an anomaly of nature. (Ulrichs, letter to family, Frankfurt, November 28, 1862; published in Ulrichs 1899, 55–6, and Ulrichs 1994a, 1, 49–50)

Hirschfeld was aware of his debt to his predecessor. Even the idea of a regular journal was Ulrichs'. After a preparation that took years, in December 1869 (30 years before the publication of the first volume of the *JfsZ*), Ulrichs had assembled enough material to permit a monthly periodical named *Uranos: Contributions to Research of the Natural Riddle of Uranism and for Discussion of the Moral and Social Interests of Urninghood*. Unfortunately there were too few subscribers for the ambitious project, such that the first issue had to be distributed in January 1870 with a second title page and was transformed into the tenth instalment of Ulrichs' *Forschungen*, under the title *Prometheus* (Kennedy 1988, 167–8).

Unlike Ulrichs, who had to publish all of his work at his own expense, Hirschfeld held a highly privileged position as editor of the *Jahrbuch*; Max and Ferdinand Spohr were loyal and generous publishers who sometimes took great financial risks for the common good, and even paid him, Hirschfeld an honorarium as editor, much to the annoyance of some Committee members.³ Most importantly, Hirschfeld could attract people from various disciplines for the journal: for instance “Numa Praetorius” (= Eugen Wilhelm), a lawyer, whose choice of pseudonym deliberately reflected his sympathy for Ulrichs, who had published as “Numa Numantius” until 1865. For the introductory volume of the *Jahrbuch*, Praetorius contributed an extensive programmatic paper on laws against homosexuality (“The Criminal Penalties against Same-Sex Intercourse”).⁴ Beginning in Volume 2, he contributed an amazingly thorough annual bibliography listing and commenting on every publication relevant to homosexuality. When the journal was at its most active (that is, until 1906—according to Keilson-Lauritz 1997, 44 and 2004, 19), two gay classicists joined the Committee, who defined scholarly discourse on

Greek and Roman homoeroticism and pederasty in the early twentieth century: Otto Kiefer, a former lawyer who taught Greek, Latin, and history after World War I at the Odenwald School, a prestigious private boarding school; and secondary school teacher Dr. Paul Brandt, *alias* “Professor Dr. Hans Licht” from Leipzig, already known for his 1902 commentary on Ovid's *Ars amatoria* and for a monograph on Sappho published in 1905. Brandt/Licht had a vision of studying homoerotic aspects of the entire Greek corpus, from Homer to late antiquity, and of translating all of the relevant texts for a broader German audience. The working title for this gargantuan project was “*Paidōn erōs* [love of boys] in Greek Literature.” Ten instalments appeared in different journals and publications at irregular intervals from 1906 to 1922 (Licht 1906, 622).

The Role of Greco-Roman Literature in Ulrichs' *Riddle of Man-Manly Love*

As a lone, self-taught campaigner, Ulrichs readily admitted that he was always learning something new. He adapted a quotation from Virgil (*Aen.* 4.175) for his motto: “*Crescit eundo*” (“It grows as it goes”; Obermayer 2007, 50–1). Thus it was only in 1866, after five instalments of his *Forschungen* had been published, that a friend told him about Heinrich Hössli of Switzerland, who in 1836–8 had already published a monumental two-volume study *Eros: Greek Love in Relation to History, Education, Literature and Legislation in Every Era* (Hössli 1996) and, much to Ulrichs' sorrow, had died in 1864. From Hössli's book Ulrichs also learned of Friedrich Wilhelm Basilius von Ramdohr's *Venus Urania*,⁵ which Hössli had called “the most important book we have on sexual love” (Hössli 1996, 1: 277). In *Gladius furens* Ulrichs wrote an impressive emotional description of how thinking of the courageous, self-taught Swiss hatter strengthened his resolve to speak out at the sixth German Law Conference in 1867, after his proposal to review and/or repeal the penal provisions against homosexual relations was suppressed. He was about to lose heart,

But I wanted to be worthy of Hössli. And I did not want to die without first having spoken out candidly for the suppressed rights of persons with innate needs ...With these thoughts, on August 29, 1867, in the great hall of the Munich Odeon, in front of more than 500 German legal experts, including members of the legislature and

a Bavarian prince, with my heart thumping, I stepped up to the podium. (Ulrichs 1994a, 2: *Gladius furens*, p. 2)

Despite his admiration for his predecessor, Ulrichs was not afraid to criticize his methods: Hössli's work, he said, was "tiresomely verbose," the material was completely disorganized, with no scientific substance. Hössli's basic idea, that male-to-male love is innate, was "only asserted, not proven" (Ulrichs 1994a, 2: *Memnon* II, p. 129), in spite of extensive material in the second volume of Hössli's *Eros* (Hössli 1996). Ulrichs' own approach was much more systematic, thoughtful and scientific: he too contemplated publishing an anthology of Uranian poetry, but separately, in a supplementary volume titled *Nemus sacrum* (*The Sacred Grove*). This volume, though often mentioned, never materialized—probably in consequence of a search of his home by the Prussian police in 1867 in which all of his material was confiscated, including manuscripts concerning Hadrian and Antinous and his complete plans for *Nemus sacrum*.⁶

Yet, in the surviving studies, Ulrichs' striving for a serious scholarly analysis of the ancient texts is unmistakable. His mastery of the Greco-Roman sources, although he was not a classicist, exhibits a broad background in the humanities and his love of Greco-Roman antiquity as a completely different world, whose texts document same-sex love as a natural, commonsense phenomenon. This, together with his deep and radical belief in equality before the law, was the most important buttress and source of strength for his political struggle for decriminalization. With his strikingly accurate knowledge of the literature, Ulrichs deliberately stressed the cultural difference between the reality of modern Germany and the ancient world, hoping thus to show the injustice of the discrimination against "Uranians" in Germany's political and legal systems.

It is noticeable that, in five of the later studies (*Forschungen* vi to xii, 1868–80)—namely *Gladius furens*, *Incubus*, *Argonauticus*, *Araxes*, and *Critische Pfeile* (*Critical Shafts*)—Ulrichs did not employ classical texts. References to a number of Greco-Roman authors at the very beginning of the first instalment in 1864 (Ulrichs 1994a, 1: *Vindex*) apparently represented commitments to be fulfilled in subsequent instalments. The hastily written papers of the first two years—*Inclusa*, *Formatrix*, and *Ara spei*—did so to a limited extent. But it was only after three more years without any publications, in *Memnon*, the seventh and longest instalment, that he used classical evidence more than ever before. Then, surprisingly, his treatment of Greek and Roman Uranians essentially ceased. Did he really believe that he had fully exhausted the ancient material? Or did he no longer have adequate access to academic libraries?

A key to resolving the apparent fluctuation in his use of ancient

sources is the subject area of the different studies, which is indicated by their subtitles. Studies ii, iv, and vii are based on science, and Ulrichs believed that literary analyses have scientific value.⁷ The fifth study, *Ara spei* (*Altar of Hope*), is subtitled *Studies in the Ethics and Social Philosophy of Uranian Love*, an area that would still be closely connected with literary studies today. All of the other studies had a predominantly legal or criminological orientation.

Otto Kiefer in the *Jahrbuch*

Early in 1900 the Committee noticed a young lawyer who had two major interests apart from his professional duties: ancient Greek culture and the struggle for homosexual emancipation. This was Otto Kiefer. As early as 1902, when he was 26, he issued two publications at Max Spohr Verlag: a campaign pamphlet on *The Importance of the Love of Youths for Our Time*, published under the pseudonym “Dr. Reiffegg” (Kiefer 1902a); and the journal of a young lawyer striving to fulfill his unconditional, passionate love for an underage youth, without regard for his own future career (Kiefer 1902b). His hopes were dashed because “the law” would not allow his union with his beloved or the return of his love; he could only express how he felt by generously financing his “poor darling’s” studies at great personal expense. Kiefer’s choice of the Latin pseudonym “Pugnator” (“The Fighter”) made it very clear that he wished this paper, defiantly titled *The Triumph of Love: Journal of an Outlaw*, to be taken as a political tract of protest against the predominant social customs, which criminalized any man with homosexual feelings. Numa Praetorius reviewed both publications a year later, in 1903. He paraphrased Kiefer 1902a in surprising detail and recommended the paper to his readers as “full of earnest idealism” (*JfsZ* 5 of 1903, p. 1014), but he roundly condemned its pedophile aspect (bibliography in the same issue, at pp. 1012–25 and 1084–6).

Also in 1903 Kiefer’s first translations of standard Greek school texts appeared from the well-known publisher Diederichs Verlag. For a more exclusive audience, he translated Greek love poetry with Piper Verlag of Munich in 1906 (*Liebesgedichte aus der griechischen Anthologie: Mit Benutzung älterer Übersetzungen herausgegeben und eingeleitet / Love Poems from the Greek Anthology*) and in 1912 (*Griechische Liebesgedichte: Mit Benutzung älterer Übersetzungen / Greek Love Poems*).

The first of three classical papers in the *Jahrbuch* by Kiefer, from 1905 to 1908, must have been proposed by the Committee, possibly in

response to a paper titled “Two Platonists,” which he had published in the journal *Der Mensch* in 1904 and which was reviewed in the seventh volume of the *Jahrbuch*, in 1905 (pp. 806–7). His aim, Kiefer stated, was to present the “natural basis of Plato's philosophy of love,” which even leading German experts on Plato like Heinrich von Stein and Eduard Zeller had discussed only disparagingly, if at all. It was not surprising, Kiefer exclaimed, if many of his contemporaries had a completely false idea of “Platonic love” as a purely spiritual relationship—and that, of course, only with a member of the opposite sex (Kiefer 1905, 109). In concluding his opening discussion, Kiefer unabashedly reduced the question of the true meaning of “Platonic love” to that of Plato's attitude toward homosexuality, and he held out the promise of a quick solution. It would come from various sources: Plato's own works, as well as more or less reliable reports of his life (Kiefer 1905, 110). Kiefer considered the biographical sources rather unreliable, but they did agree on one point, namely that Plato “himself experienced the feelings that are often portrayed so admirably in his dialogues.” According to Plutarch, Diogenes Laertius, and Aelian, Plato had amorous relations not only with Dion of Syracuse, whom he won over for his doctrine and with whom he had a friendship that lasted for many years, but also with Aster, Phaidros and Alexis. On the other hand, Kiefer regarded the homosexual epigrams attributed to Plato as “too dubious to yield any certain knowledge concerning Plato” (Kiefer 1905, 111).

As his point of departure in interpreting Plato's works, Kiefer used Chapter 3, on homosexuality in Greece, of the standard work *Sexual Inversion* by the English authors Havelock Ellis and J. A. Symonds (Ellis and Symonds 1901), who argued that Plato did not have the same views on homosexuality in his old age as in his youth. The enthusiasm of the *Phaedrus* and *Symposium* dwindled into sympathy in the *Lysis* and *Charmides*, and in his last work, the *Laws*, Plato condemned pederasty as “unnatural.” Given this pattern, which he regarded as “very useful,” Kiefer studied these dialogues to discover the reasons for Plato's changing views (Kiefer 1905, 112). The focus of the earliest dialogues, *Lysis* and *Charmides*, Kiefer claimed, was not *erōs* but friendship (*philia*) between the older teacher and the boy. Kiefer interpreted this as evidence for a moderate position on pederasty, differentiated according to age. Plato would not generally regard the attraction of older men to boys as immoral, but he would reject any sexual activity (Kiefer 1905, 114–15).

Even in the *Phaedrus*, Plato's reservations concerning sensual desire and the purely sexual aspect of pederasty are clear. Only the “corrupt and uninitiated” common man takes pleasure in purely sensual love and sexual satisfaction; “initiates” prefer a different kind of love, the

literal enthusiasm, prophetic and poetic, inspired in a mature lover when he sees the beauty of a youth. The sensual aspect of such a relationship would be limited to embraces and lying next to each other (Kiefer 1905, 117–20). One finds a similar dichotomy of pederastic relations in the *Symposium*. Kiefer (1905, 124–5) cited Alcibiades' "faithful portrait" of Socrates as Plato's ideal man, embracing the most beautiful youth as a father embraces his son.

Given this background, the condemnation of pederasty in the *Laws* is logically consistent, since even when young, Plato approved of the purely sensual type of pederasty only with reservations (Kiefer 1905, 125). However, Kiefer interjected, one should not place too much emphasis on the stance of Plato's last dialogue. On the contrary, modern readers should be oriented by the views he expressed in the "wonderful" early and middle dialogues:

Plato's name is too deeply entwined with homosexuality ...As long as there are homosexuals—and there will be, as long as there are human beings—the Platonic dialogues, even though their primary importance lies in an area that has nothing to do with their attitude towards pederasty, will provide consolation and edification for unfortunate individuals who will find in those dialogues not only a relative justification of their sexual drive but also its noblest manifestation. (Kiefer 1905, 125f.)

Whereas Kiefer's study of Plato only directly interpreted the sources, his second paper in the *Jahrbuch* was a review in which he discussed five historians and four writers who all expressed very different views concerning the relationship of Hadrian and Antinous; only afterwards did he compare their views with the sources. Kiefer examined each author's version with regard to two basic questions: Was the death of Antinous an accident, a suicide, or even a sacrifice? And was he for Hadrian only a toy boy or something more? Kiefer criticized the enthusiastic idealists as well as the zealous moralists. Two apologists for Antinous, the literary historian Hermann Schiller (1883) and the archaeologist Lorentz Dietrichson (1884), had argued that Hadrian could not have related to the "ideal form" of Antinous impurely. Kiefer (1906, 570) dismissed them abruptly as "obviously biased." His subsequent comparison of the works under review with the chief historical sources yielded a surprising result: the sources for the story of Hadrian and Antinous differed considerably from one another. They agreed only on two basic facts: Antinous died in Egypt and was venerated posthumously. So, inevitably, one had to investigate the credibility of the sources in order to differentiate mere gossip from reliable history. Kiefer's biased view as a professed heathen pederast probably accounts for his rejection of all of the

Christian sources as prejudiced (Kiefer 1906, 576).⁸ Yet he also judged pagan sources as sometimes unreliable. To resolve this problem, Kiefer turned to Schulz's (1904) biography of Hadrian, which in his view had for the first time judged the relationship between the emperor and the beautiful youth rightly. Schulz compared the versions of the earliest, sometimes tendentious source, Dio Cassius, and the *Vita Hadriani* of Aelius Spartianus (*Historia Augusta*). Kiefer agreed wholeheartedly with his conclusions, since they matched the idealistic conception of Greek pederasty he had expressed in his contribution on Plato:

In all probability, Hadrian's relationship with the beautiful Bithynian youth with the wonderful eyes was pure, rather than stained with physical lust ...Hadrian did not weep because of frustrated desire for the toy boy Antinous, but because every element of aesthetic feeling, devotion, and tenderness in him rebelled against the fate that had torn away from him the embodiment of his dreams of physical and perhaps even intellectual, or rather spiritual perfection. (Kiefer 1906, 578–9)

Toward the end of an elaborate series of arguments clearing the emperor's friendship with the beautiful youth of any suspicion of base sensuality, Kiefer (1906, 580–1) surprises the reader with a cheeky postscript:

This whole argument [sc. whether Antinous was Hadrian's toy boy or not] is ridiculous ...Even if there were concrete evidence of [their] sexual love, this famous couple would be no less dear to us, because this much is certain: If Hadrian divinized him, if thousands gladly worshipped him after his death, if he was immortalized by art, the boy was not *only* a toy.

In his third and last paper for the *Jahrbuch*, “Socrates and Homosexuality,” Kiefer (1908, 199) attacked the Viennese philosophy professor Heinrich Gomperz, who, in his popular book on the Greek philosophers' outlook on life (Gomperz 1904), just like his many predecessors, had not dared to deal with the question whether Socrates was homosexual. Comparing Xenophon, Plato, and Diogenes Laertius, Kiefer (1908, 207–8) attempted to reconstruct the personality and sexual orientation of Socrates and reached the provisional conclusion that the latter was subjectively very susceptible to the love of youths, but still did not respect sensual love and expected all “good and noble” men to have the same attitude.

Nevertheless, Kiefer (1908, 208) argued, there were no indications that Socrates would have regarded pederasty as a crime. On the contrary, he only wanted to persuade his friends and pupils that sensuality was inevitably associated with severe dependency on the

external world and would eventually conflict with the ideal of inner freedom. This would also explain the irritating passage in the *Memorabilia* (1.3) in which Socrates advises friends who could not abstain to have relations only with boys who could *not* bind their soul (Kiefer 1908, 210).

Kiefer's overall conclusion emphasized the uniquely severe and idealistic character of Socrates: he was at least bisexual but did not respect the sexual drive, which he totally sublimated, in keeping with his deeply spiritual character and his ethical ideal of the greatest possible inner freedom (Kiefer 1908, 210–11). However, such rigorous philosophical demands, Kiefer opined, are anachronistic now, with the homosexual emancipation movement. Such strongly developed powers of reason no longer exist, and our science and ethics often favor indulgence where Socrates would have obliged abstinence (Kiefer 1908, 211). As the remarkable and surprising conclusion of the article points out, Socrates not only would be completely unsuitable as a figurehead and role model for homosexuals in their struggle for equal rights and recognition; on the contrary, in a way Socrates had even initiated the tradition of discrimination and persecution against which they were struggling:

For us today, he marks the beginning of a development in relation to homosexuality which ultimately, in the hands of fanatics and priests, sent homosexuals to burn at the stake. (Kiefer 1908, 211)

Paul Brandt, the “Fighter”

The second long classics article in Volume 8 (1906) of the *Jahrbuch* was by Paul Brandt, a senior teacher at König-Albert-Gymnasium in Leipzig who still dared at that time to publish under his own name. Starting in 1908, he used pseudonyms to protect his professional position. The second instalment of *Paidōn erōs* in the 1908 *Jahrbuch* (Volume 9) was signed “P. Stephanus.” For later articles, chiefly in the journals *Anthropophyteia* and *Zeitschrift für Sexualwissenschaften*, he chose a name suited to his ambition to spread enlightenment, which became his trademark: Hans Licht—always with an academic title added, such as “Dr.” or “Prof. Dr. Hans Licht.”⁹

In a lengthy preliminary statement dated “New Year's Eve 1905,” he declared his resolve to join the struggle for the repeal of Paragraph 175:

I was happy to comply with Dr. Hirschfeld's request to contribute to the current *Jahrbuch*. For it is my conviction that every educated

man should consider it his undeniable duty to work according to his ability for the repeal of Paragraph 175, regardless of whether he is directly involved. Anyone who has made a little effort to follow for just a couple of years how much unnamed misery this unfortunate law causes, how many tears it provokes, how it victimizes even our most intelligent citizens, will open his eyes with a shudder and consider it a disgrace that such a law still exists in our time as would suitably compliment the Dark Ages. (Licht 1906, 622)

We can only speculate as to how Brandt came to know Hirschfeld. In his autobiography *Von einst bis jetzt (From Once till Now)* (Hirschfeld 1986), Hirschfeld names only his closest associates, who were connected with the Committee or the Institute for Sexual Science. Perhaps Spohr's attention was drawn by Brandt's publication on Sappho in 1905, which, judging from the title at least, was reminiscent of Hirschfeld's *Sappho und Sokrates*. Brandt had already made a name for himself as a classicist. In 1902, four years after his dissertation on Pindar, he published a scholarly commentary on Ovid's *Ars amatoria* in which he distinguished himself for the first time as an expert on ancient erotica.

At any rate, Brandt, in his first contribution to his serial project *Paidōn erōs*—a survey of lyric and bucolic poetry—fought openly. He not only came out as a supporter of the campaign against Paragraph 175, but also aimed in the paper to show that pederasty was so indissolubly linked with Greek literature that we owe to “the sunny Greeks ...a large corpus of the most splendid poetry” ever composed.

In the preface to his first essay, Brandt announced an ambitious project, which was to occupy most of his time until 1922:

The love of youths is so central to Greek literature that the author believes that the time has come for a comprehensive study of this aspect throughout Greek literature, starting with the poetry. (Licht 1906, 622)

He would show in a series of papers that *paidōn erōs* was ubiquitous in every literary genre. He proudly suggested that he not only had mastered all of the material, but could even predict the outcome of this research:

The earlier we regress in time, the more purely and chastely the ideal aspect of pederasty emerges in the literature, and the later we go, the more prominently the sensual side emerges. (Licht 1906, 622)

For his own protection, whenever possible, Brandt avoided translating the technical term “pederasty” as *Knabenliebe* (“love of boys”), using instead the term *Jünglingsliebe* (“love of youths”), which lacked the legal implications. He stressed that, in Greek, *pais* did not

mean a child before puberty, but an adolescent. Semantically, he claimed, *pais* and *ephēbos* were used synonymously (Licht 1906, 623–4).

In the first instalment of *Paidōn erōs* Brandt discussed Greek lyric poetry from the classical period and bucolic poetry. In accordance with his intention that his work should be understandable for a general audience, he presented the poems that are often only fragmentary in the form of convenient summaries and paraphrases interspersed with excerpts in German translation in the main text. The original Greek (if fragmentary) was given in the notes. The material was arranged by genre. The section on lyric poetry (pp. 627–60), which was much larger than the bucolic section, comprised elegiac and iambic (pp. 627–36), then melic and choral poetry (pp. 637–60). The bucolic section consisted solely of Theocritus and Bion (pp. 660–73). Contrary to the intention announced in the preface, Brandt translated many of the passages cited himself and only seldom used others' translations.

In the second study, “Poems from the [Greek] Anthology” (Licht 1908), as we should expect, the discussion of Strato's *Mousa Paidike* occupies most of the space. Under the heading “The Characteristics of the Boys” (Licht 1908, 233–48), Brandt, writing as “P. Stephanus,” quotes or paraphrases about two thirds of the 94 epigrams of Strato. By arbitrarily rearranging the sequence of the poems, he constructs a kind of “love story.” According to Brandt's “politically correct” interpretation, the entire purpose of courting a boy is to share kisses, “love's sweetest symbol” (Licht 1908, 235), in return for which the poet offers gifts. Capriciousness, flirting, and haughtiness on the part of the boy are sanctioned with complaints and threats. Finally, there are poems reminiscing on past joys and pleasures, in which we encounter a procession of pretty boys and lovable youths (Licht 1908, 238).

But this highly idealized overview, like a movie rated “fit for family viewing,” suits only some of Strato's epigrams, and Brandt cannot avoid conceding that “desire eventually goes farther and seeks intimacy” (Licht 1908, 241). Allowing that he should not omit such poems from a complete scholarly study, he still practised self-censorship, even though he was protected by his pseudonym. Since he does not dare to translate or discuss Strato's hard porn, he resorts to avoidance tactics. He relegated these poems to the notes, left them in the original Greek, and discussed them only in Latin. To sooth his conscience as a scholar, he noted that “Most of these epigrams [had already been] translated and briefly interpreted by Dr. Otto Knapp” (Licht 1908, 243; see Knapp 1906). The “censored” epigrams of Book 12 of the Greek Anthology, he argued, represented the late stage of

pederasty, in which “demanding sensual passion” dominated the poet’s interest, in striking contrast to the “true nature of Greek pederasty”:

Aesthetic delight in the harmonic beauty of a boy’s body is the beginning of Greek pederasty ...The high-minded Greek joyfully greeted the task of awakening the beautiful soul in a beautiful body, of shaping what could be molded, in short, of making the beloved youth what they called *kalos kai agathos*. Starting from the boy’s beauty, [this love] above suspicion advanced to the second, more important stage: to awaken and ennoble the spirituality in this beautiful vessel. And the Greeks knew discreetly and quite rightly that this is more rewarding with a boy or youth than with a girl or woman. (Licht 1908, 242–3)

With Brandt’s androcentric and misogynistic conception of the sexes, Strato’s hard homosexual porn must have seemed out of place, since it lacked any spiritual or aesthetic feeling and reduced the boy to a sexual object, a role that in Brandt’s view of ancient Greece was reserved for women.

Brandt professed that he had no desire to discuss the details of this aspect of *paidōn erōs*.¹⁰ He therefore requested the reader’s understanding if he did not translate certain epigrams but was satisfied with printing the Greek text in the notes (Licht 1908, 243). But Brandt was only maintaining appearances with this gesture of modesty; actually a pleasant surprise awaited the educated reader if he consulted the notes. In a note that runs for 12 pages (Licht 1908, 294–305 n. 31), Brandt not only quotes a total of thirty epigrams in the original, but adds sometimes lengthy Greek and Latin comments and intertextual cross-references.

Behind the façade of scientific distancing and objectivity, we repeatedly encounter Paul Brandt the man, a learned teacher who loved men, with an irrepressible “sentimental” longing for a simpler, uncomplicated life, as for instance in this barely disguised fantasy in his introduction to Callimachus:

There are no less than twelve epigrams in the twelfth book singing the praises of beautiful boys and dedicated to the mysteries of Eros. In those times, even great teachers did not disdain the shafts of Eros; they proudly and joyfully admitted the bittersweet wounds of the revered god. (Licht 1908, 264)

The Sequel

The collaboration of Kiefer and Brandt with the *Jahrbuch* ceased after

only three years. The secession of Hirschfeld's critics associated with Benedict Friedlaender (see n. 3), a sharp decline of subscriptions, and the resulting serious financial difficulties of the Committee brought it about that in the following years, instead of the *Jahrbuch*, only “urgent releases” known as “quarterly reports” of the Committee could be published, with very limited contents and drastically reduced editorial material (Keilson-Lauritz 2004, 12–15 and 22–5; Herzer 2001, 126).

After the war Kiefer published only sporadically. His teaching at the Odenwald School seems to have been too demanding, and he invested most of his remaining energy in his last and greatest work, *Kulturgeschichte Roms unter besonderer Beruecksichtigung seiner Sitten* (Kiefer 1933), which is still a standard today in Gilbert and Helen Highet's 1934 translation, as *Sexual Life in Ancient Rome*.

Paul Brandt, however, continued his steady research with inexhaustible productivity, publishing at least two items, articles, or even books almost every year, until he died of exhaustion in 1929. He switched from the *Jahrbuch* to *Anthropophyteia*, which was distributed only to academics. The fact that this journal was not available to the public enabled Brandt to take far greater liberties in the treatment of pederastic obscenity than before (Licht 1910, 128)—an incalculable advantage, particularly for his study of the fragments of Attic comedy in *Paidōn erōs* 3 of 1910.

Meanwhile Brandt adopted a new pseudonym, which he would keep using until the end of his life: “Hans Licht.” After the war he published, under this name, another four articles of *Paidōn erōs*, including two monographs: a German translation of Lucian's *Erotes* with an extensive commentary (= *Paidōn erōs* 7 of 1920) and a monograph on Lucian (= *Paidōn erōs* 8, of 1921). Later on Licht worked feverishly on his last major surveys, which climaxed in his three-volume masterpiece, *Sittengeschichte Griechenlands* (Licht 1926–7; translated as *Sexual Life in Ancient Greece* in 1932). In the chapter on “male homoerotica” he offered a final epitome of the most important results of his *Paidōn erōs* series, with added material on Apollonius of Rhodes and Nonnos (Licht 1926/7, 2: 115–210, particularly 180–2).

Guide to Further Reading

Lauritsen and Thorstad 1995 and Steakley 1975 give an initial survey of the homosexual emancipation movement. Ulrichs' career and work are made very accessible by the reprint of his *Forschungen* (Ulrichs 1994a, edited by H. Kennedy, and 1994b, translated into English by

M. Lombardi-Nash) and the monographs of Kennedy 1988 and Sigusch 2000. Dobler 2004, Lehmstedt 2004, and Keilson-Lauritz 1997 and 2004 give information concerning the content and publication history of the *Jahrbuch (Annual)*; on Hirschfeld's personality and life work, see his autobiography (Hirschfeld 1986) and Herzer 2001. The English translations of Licht's *Sittengeschichte Griechenlands* (Licht 1926/7, trans. Freese in 1932) and Kiefer's *Kulturgeschichte Roms* (Kiefer 1933, trans. Highet in 1934) are frequently reprinted. One finds short biographical information about them and other forerunners of the gay movement in Hergemöller 2001 and Sigusch and Grau 2009.

Notes

1 Translated and edited by James Jope and Thomas K. Hubbard.

2 Letter to relatives, Frankfurt November 28, 1862; in *JfsZ* 1 (1899): 55–6, and in Ulrichs 1994a, 1: 49–50.

3 This was one reason why Benedict Friedlaender's group separated from Hirschfeld in 1907. They objected that more than a third of the total income of the Committee was paid to Spohr Verlag and Hirschfeld, leaving little for the urgent needs of educating society (Lehmstedt 2004, 38–42).

4 “Die strafrechtlichen Bestimmungen gegen den gleichgeschlechtlichen Verkehr,” *JfsZ* 1 (1899): 97–158. On Numa Praetorius, see Sigusch and Grau 2009, 764–6, Hergemoeller 2001, 737–8, Hirschfeld 1986, 62–4 and especially Walravens 1984. About a quarter of the paper concerns Greek and Roman penal provisions.

5 Ramdohr 1798, vol. 3, 13–422, especially Section 3, Part 1, Books 13 to 18 on Greco-Roman sexuality.

6 Ulrichs 1994a, 2: *Memnon* II, XXXIII, IX. Following the Prussian annexation of the kingdom of Hannover, Ulrichs, who was loyal to the king, was arrested twice for political reasons. Much of the confiscated material was sent to the foreign minister in Berlin, and Ulrichs was apparently unable to have it returned (Kennedy 1988, 96–100 and 115).

7 For example, he described Tibullus 1.4 as “completely scientifically accurate” (Ulrichs 1994a, 2: *Memnon* I, 15) and found a “scientific core” in Phaedrus 4.16 (Ulrichs 1994a, 4: *Prometheus*, 18).

8 Kiefer's one-sided attitude, which was exactly the same that he criticized prejudiced opponents for, deeply offended one of his

critics, Hans Freimark (review of Kiefer, 1906, in *Anthropophyteia* 3, 1906, 446–7).

9 In spite of all his precautions, Brandt too became a victim of the sodomy law. Probably shortly after the end of the war, he was denounced by a colleague and relegated to Schneeberg in the Erz Mountains, which is described sarcastically in his obituary by Erich Ebermayer as follows: “Schneeberg. A modern exile. A Siberia in the enlightened Western Europe. There is no library in Schneeberg. A scholar is deprived of his last resort: his work. The winter lasts eight months. There are seven cliques always occupying reserved tables at supper. There are only laborers, philistines, and nationalists ... There are no flowers in Schneeberg. For an intellectual there, life is over” (Ebermayer 1929, 17)

10 Even in this defensive mode, Brandt would not accept the stylized and purely pornographic desire of the authors of the *Mousa Paidike*. He still supposed that their interest in boys was not purely physical when he wrote “that they sought, as well, to satisfy the drive for detumescence with the beloved youth with whom their heart was bound” (Licht 1908, 243).

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Chapter 37

Ancient Sexuality on Screen

Monica S. Cyrino

It was sex that first attracted the earliest filmmakers to screen the ancient world. The opportunity to present scantily clad women and brawny, bare-chested men mingling with pagan abandon at lavish banquets and gladiator games excited the artistic and commercial senses of the first cinematic entrepreneurs. Although the cinema has been especially captivated by the perceived sexual excess of Roman antiquity, the complicated sexualities of the ancient Greeks also receive some attention. This preference for screening antiquity as a time of sexual exploration and excitement, where the lack of sexual inhibition was set against the rise of powerful warriors and politicians as well as against the birth of empires and their eventual destruction, has provided the historical framework for literally hundreds of films and television programs set in the ancient Greek and Roman worlds. While purporting to offer a morally edifying illustration of the dangers of over-reaching power, the process of screening antiquity allows filmmakers and television producers to exploit the audience's fascination with Greek and Roman "deviance" and with the corruption produced by absolute power and unbridled sexualities. Viewers of films and television programs about the ancient world have enjoyed a long and often complex relationship with the representation of antiquity on screen, and this relationship has been well analyzed in the last few years by scholars and critics.

Filmmakers and television producers regularly return to classical antiquity as a persistent, powerful source for historical and literary models to be celebrated on the screen, as well as for negative paradigms to be censured or covertly savored. Ancient Rome, in particular, continues to play a starring role as the ideal site for the most iconic and extravagant set pieces that the epic cinema uses in order to portray the spectacle of grandeur, wealth, and debauchery. These impressive scenes include military triumphs and chariot races,

lavish banquets and orgies, and the bloody, brutal games in the arena. The viewing audience is invited to experience the cinematic depiction of ancient Rome, as antiquity is deployed to accomplish a number of different objectives: the image of Rome on screen is used to support contemporary political goals, to explore current social issues, or to engage in cultural debates about the modern world's relationship to the classical past. Moreover, the image of ancient Rome is frequently used as a visual backdrop for adventure and romance, and so the audience is thrilled to view the luxury, debauchery, and sexual excess notoriously enjoyed by the ancient Romans.

The opulence, power, and beauty of cinematic Rome is regularly set against its corruption, brutality, and decadence, an opposition that creates a complicated mechanism of distancing and identification for the viewing audience. Within this complex process—a simultaneous attraction to and repulsion away from the luscious but often excessive depictions of the ancient Romans on screen—belongs the representation of Roman sexual “deviance”: the association of ancient Rome with sexually exotic practices and extreme forms of sexual intercourse. There is a long cinematic tradition of using Roman sexual “deviance” on screen to reflect or critique current social attitudes about sexuality, and often these images and narratives can be interpreted as expressions of anxiety about changing sexual mores in contemporary society. Since it is almost always centered on elite or aristocratic characters, Roman sexual “deviance” on screen can also function as an analog for the characters' political rapacity: in this capacity, sexual “deviance” also represents the corruption of power.

Films and television series set in ancient Rome frequently begin by seeking to define “normal” sexuality within the context of the plot, in order to demonstrate the extent to which the Roman sexuality shown on screen is “deviant.” However, what is defined as “normal” sexuality has changed quite a bit over the past century in the history of cinematic and televisual entertainment. Therefore the definition of onscreen “deviance” also continues to undergo a parallel transformation: indeed, this process can clearly be labeled an escalation. This chapter surveys some depictions of Roman sexual “deviance” on screen and seeks to explore the question of how the representation of Roman sexuality escalates; the less frequent images of sexuality in cinematic ancient Greece will also be briefly considered. This survey will focus on the major narrative and visual tropes that are used to portray the escalation of “deviance” and will suggest ways in which the re-creation of Greek and Roman sexual “deviance” on screen reflects modern sexual and social attitudes and prejudices.

From the earliest period of epic cinema about ancient Rome up

until the mid-1930s, cinematic images of Roman sexual degeneracy, and especially representations of homosexuality, were deeply embedded in Hollywood's ancient world films. While homosexuality was only implied by the films' narrative and visual imagery, as Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones observes, "the emphasis was always on homosexuals as people who deviated from traditional ...gender roles" (2012). Allusive strategies for screening sexuality became more apparent after 1930 with the adoption of the Motion Picture Production Code—commonly known as the Hays Code, only fully enforced starting in July 1934—which prohibited any explicit reference to "sex perversion," including homosexuality. Yet images of homosexuals in early Hollywood films were not hard to find: these were perhaps influenced by the "Pansy Craze," a popular phenomenon of 1920s and 1930s New York performance culture that had emerged in countless movies, plays, and nightclubs of the "Jazz Age" (as chronicled by historian George Chauncey in his 1995 book *Gay New York*); while "lesbian chic" was also a marketable visual style aesthetic of the period. For example Cecil B. DeMille, the great Bible-movie mogul, was influenced by the avant-garde pop-cultural currents of his time: his film *The Sign of the Cross* (1932), set during the reign of Nero, portrays the young emperor's court as a kind of Weimar cabaret act or bohemian burlesque, as Llewellyn-Jones describes it—with overtones of a Broadway fetish or drag club. DeMille uses techniques in the narrative, dialogue, *mise en scène*, and set/costume design to construct onscreen Roman homosexuality while hinting at contemporary American homosexual culture. Moreover, in a regular feature of ancient-themed films, *The Sign of the Cross* uses these coded images of homosexual sadomasochism and "perversion" to create a clear contrast with the moral and sexual probity of the Christian characters: the film entices audiences with scenes of Roman orgies and decadence while at the same time claiming to denounce such excesses. Thus, in films produced at the cusp of the Hays Code enforcement, such as DeMille's *The Sign of the Cross* and later his *Cleopatra* (1934), the ancient Roman setting afforded filmmakers the liberty to deal with contemporary issues of sexual preference and alternative sexual subcultures while screening them as titillating yet censurable images of erotic indulgence and degeneracy.

The Hays Code continued to have a substantial impact on the narrative and visual content of Hollywood films from the mid-1930s to the late 1960s, an era popularly known as the "golden age" of ancient world epic movie making. Filmmakers in post-Code Hollywood, particularly in the 1950s and 1960s, were thus compelled to develop sophisticated strategies for representing sexuality on screen by using coded references to sexual practices and, especially in the

case of the ancient Roman epic, for anything deemed excessive or “deviant.” This creative period witnessed a complex negotiation between the Hays Code system of censorship and the eagerness of audiences to view films set in the ancient world, where a tension was created between the moviegoers' conflicting desires to embrace, but also condemn, a provocative or even debauched onscreen antiquity. As Joanna Paul argues:

That the ancient world should become a particularly contested area is not surprising: on the one hand, its biblical-era stories were ideal material for filmmakers adhering to the Code's injunctions to censor immoral material and uphold traditional values; on the other hand, the distant ancient setting, and the moral imperative of its narrative, compensated for and positively legitimated spectacular displays of eroticism and violence that were often more risqué than those typically allowed (Paul 2012).

As discussed below, even such a relatively innocent depiction of the ancient world onscreen as *Quo Vadis* (1951) calls attention to the masculine sexuality of its hero, Marcus Vinicius, and the successful seduction skills of the Empress Poppaea. Films of this era also continued to test the boundaries of the Code by screening suggestive images and scenes of bi- and homosexuality, as in the infamous “oysters and snails” bath scene in *Spartacus* (1960), examined in detail below. A notably contested anecdote involves Gore Vidal, one of the screen writers on *Ben-Hur* (1959), who later claimed that he advised the film's director, William Wyler, to have Stephen Boyd, the actor in the role of the Roman tribune Messala, play the pivotal reunion scene with Ben-Hur (Charlton Heston) as if the two were once lovers: this subtext was coded so deeply that Heston continued to deny the story's veracity until his death. Although ancient world films could not openly flaunt the Hays Code, nevertheless they did succeed in creating provocative paradigms of how the mid-century cinema business worked around the moral censorship parameters to shape receptions of antiquity. By the late 1960s enforcement of the Code became impossible, and in November 1968 it was abandoned entirely in favor of the new Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) film rating system, under which content restrictions were significantly lessened.

The Roman epics of the 1950s inherited from the earlier cinema the visual trope of representing big lavish set pieces, at the time rendered even more spectacular with new film technologies, under the threat of competition with the upstart medium of television. Among these set pieces is the Roman orgy, or what could be termed the “banquet with benefits.” Lavish, loud, decadent, visually titillating, filled with semi-clad dancing girls and oiled-up beefcake studs

wrestling on the floor, the Roman orgy scene is shocking because of its blatant display of public eroticism—one that invites the eager gaze of the film's spectators as well as of the onscreen participants—and because of its intimation of group sexual experience. Indeed the orgy scene becomes so traditional within the context of the Roman epic film that it is later parodied and referenced more often than chariot races. In the 1951 version of *Quo Vadis*, directed by Mervyn LeRoy, the orgy scene is fairly tame by comparison with later film or cable television representations. Moreover, while in *Quo Vadis* there is no explicit sex, group or otherwise, the openly erotic nature of the public imperial event is made clear in the narrative: the Emperor Nero (Peter Ustinov) has made a gift of the lovely hostage, Lygia (Deborah Kerr), to reward his brash but victorious commander, Marcus Vinicius (Robert Taylor). In the *Quo Vadis* orgy scene, the locus of the sexual tension and conflict is between the lustful Marcus and the submissive Lygia, but the generic conventions of 1950s religious epics demand that the man will eventually be domesticated by his belief in Christ and his love for a good woman: indeed the conquering general who rode into Rome in a triumphal chariot at the beginning of the film will at the end ride out with his wife and adopted child in a rustic wagon, the ancient Roman equivalent of a minivan. But note the characterization of the Emperor Nero: he may be puerile, narcissistic, and easily swayed by the smooth advisor, Petronius (Leo Genn), but he still recognizes a sexy woman when he sees one: the hostage, Lygia, is “too narrow in the hips.” Thus the mere mention of male sexual desire is enough for this film's version of sexual provocation: there is no explicit “deviance” in sexual matters for these red-blooded Roman males.

The orgy became so fixed in the visual conventions of the mid-century Roman epic that these scenes easily lent themselves to parody in later comic versions of the ancient epic film. Richard Lester's film version of the stage play *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* (1966) uses the orgy scene to express the sexual liberality of the 1960s, where the bikini-clad courtesans from the earlier brothel scene offer their smooth, bare midriffs as serving platters for the hungry military guests. In this scene, to amuse the more sexually hip film audience of the 1960s, the notion that the orgy is “deviant” is mocked—the Captain calls it “a sit-down orgy for fourteen”—as it functions merely as a distraction behind which the clumsy mischief making of the main characters takes place.

Perhaps the only real “deviance” of a sexual nature shown in these early religious epics is the aggressive and voyeuristic sexuality of the elite Roman female, for instance the Empress Poppaea (Patricia Laffan) in *Quo Vadis*, which suggests a contemporary 1950s anxiety

about assertive (and perhaps adulterous) female sexuality. The film thus offers a whiff of sexual inversion in the depiction of Poppaea's aggressive and voyeuristic sexuality. In the earlier orgy scene, Poppaea forced the gaze of the camera lens through her ruby-red spyglass to focus on the object of her desire, Marcus, whom she wants for herself. In a later scene, Poppaea effortlessly seduces Marcus by inviting him to her imperial couch and simply taking from him what she craves. Again, the theme of the sexually aggressive elite Roman female becomes so traditional in the context of the ancient Roman epic that it was an easy mark for later comic filmmakers, as in Mel Brooks' *History of the World, Part I* (1981), where the Roman Empire sequence offers a direct send-up of LeRoy's film. In the imperial banquet scene, the suggestively named Empress Nympho (Madeline Kahn) negotiates sexual terms with the pompous but lovesick military commander, Marcus Vindictus (Shecky Green), in the presence of her husband, Nero.

So in *Quo Vadis*, a mid-century religious epic set in ancient Rome, sexual excess or "deviance" is expressed in two principal ways: first, the orgy/banquet scene is coded as "deviant" because of its suggestion of public eroticism and group sexual experience; and second, the elite Roman female is shown to be "deviant" in her aggressive sexual desires and in her ability to be the agent of seduction. Note that both of these forms of "deviance" are visually titillating for the audience, and both are contrasted with the "normal"—that is, private and domestic—Christian love between the main couple. However, a challenge was posed to filmmakers when these rather mild forms of "deviance" no longer shocked or aroused a jaded audience.

Stanley Kubrick's *Spartacus* (1960), starring Kirk Douglas in the title role, still ranks as one of the most controversial films ever made, certainly for its politics, but also for its provocative take on the representation of sexuality on screen. In this film the notion of Roman sexual "deviance" takes some intriguing turns. First, the film amplifies the trope of aggressive, voyeuristic female sexuality by linking it to the larger theme of the film: the subjugation and dehumanization of slaves by the Roman power elite. In one key scene, two aristocratic Roman women from a sophisticated urban entourage, Claudia and Helena, select pairs of gladiators to fight to the death for their sheer amusement at the *ludus* of Lentulus Batiatus (Peter Ustinov). As in earlier epic films, the nude male body of the gladiator-slave suggests a visual negotiation between strength and vulnerability. But in this scene the camera emphasizes the objectification of the gladiators as animals, as the ladies peer at them through the bars as if at a stockyard or zoo: the hierarchy of power is mediated by the cinematography. Yet the pampered Roman women experience a

purely erotic thrill from reviewing the line of male gladiators, as Claudia purrs: “Don’t put them in those suffocating tunics. Let them wear just ... enough for modesty.” In this scene, the covetous women become the active subject of the gaze, suggesting a transition to the more sexually liberated female of the 1960s, and perhaps also expressing some anxiety about this changing role. Note that Mel Brooks also robustly parodies the trope of the aggressive gaze of the elite Roman female during the “selection scene” in *History of the World, Part I*, where Empress Nympho chooses her escorts for the “midnight orgy” from an array of Roman soldiers who are naked from the waist down, and she selects them the basis of their male endowment. “You made some big decisions,” approves the imperial housekeeper.

Perhaps the most famous sexually tinged scene in the history of epic cinema about ancient Rome is the “oysters and snails” bath scene from *Spartacus*, where the elite Roman politician Marcus Licinius Crassus (Laurence Olivier) seeks to seduce the young slave boy Antoninus (Tony Curtis). In this scene, Crassus delicately explores the intellectual contours of bisexuality as a prelude to his attempted seduction of Antoninus. (see [Figure 37.1](#)). Crassus employs the Socratic method to question his attractive slave as he proposes what can and cannot be examined through the lens of morality. He concludes that one’s sexual proclivity is not a moral issue: “And taste is not the same as appetite and therefore not a question of morals, is it?” he asks Antoninus, who scrubs Crassus’ back vigorously and replies: “It could be argued so, master.” So, what is shocking or “deviant” about this scene? In recalling the bath scenes typical of the epic genre that usually display a languid temptress teasing her male visitors, the *Spartacus* bath sequence subverts the cinematic model by putting Crassus in the submerged feminine role, suggesting his sexual allure yet plainly undermining his masculine power. In the background is a tinkling Egyptian-sounding musical theme, only heard again when Crassus tries unsuccessfully to seduce Varinia (Jean Simmons), the wife of Spartacus. Thus the film depicts Crassus’ sexuality as problematic in its ambiguity and futility, certainly as unconventional in the eyes of the mid-century mainstream film audience, and generally evocative of affect-hungry Roman decadence. At least Crassus’ refusal to assign ethical implications to “deviant” sexual practices indicates that he lacks moral compass. In its portrayal of Crassus, the film’s most powerful Roman, the film codes Roman sexuality as lacking traditional, fixed roles, and as having an unconventional penchant for flexibility in types of pleasures.

Figure 37.1 Crassus (Laurence Olivier) attempts to seduce Antoninus

(Tony Curtis) in *Spartacus* (1960). Directed by Stanley Kubrick. Bryna Productions/ Universal Pictures.



Furthermore, the scene contrasts the “deviant” sexuality of Crassus—his dissolute homoeroticism and entitled refusal to be bound by norms—with the heteroperfect sexuality of Spartacus: a good husband who loves his wife Varinia, dutifully impregnates her, and treats Antoninus as the son he will never see. In *Spartacus* the scope of “normal” sexuality is defined by the titular hero, the life-affirming and heteronormative father figure, the rebel slave, Spartacus, against the death-obsessed, family-less, and sexually “deviant” elite Roman Crassus. Contrast the infamous scene above with a later one, in which Varinia, while bathing in a clear pond, first tells Spartacus that she is pregnant with his child. Varinia's “natural” bath scene, where she reveals her nude body in a forest pool before announcing her pregnancy, associates her sexuality with female fertility and the life-giving properties of water. This “natural” image functions in direct visual contrast with the *louche* urbanity of the “deviant” bath scene where Crassus tries to seduce his slave boy at the opulent villa: while both scenes are visually titillating for the audience, the narrative allows the viewer to make a judgment about the relative moralities of the characters and offers guilty absolution for any titillation.

It should also be noted that the provocative treatment of sexuality in the “oysters and snails” scene, with its oblique verbal references to bisexuality and its visual tableau of homoeroticism, drew the

disapproving attention of the studio censors. Before the film's release in 1960, the scene was cut by Universal under pressure from the American League of Decency. Yet viewing the scene thirty or more years later made it possible for a more subversive, "queer" reading, where the arguments of Crassus about his flexible sexuality seem entirely more reasonable for an elite male Roman character. For the 1991 restoration this scene was reinserted, but the sound track was damaged: so, while Curtis was available to redo his lines, the voice of Olivier was dubbed by actor Anthony Hopkins, who is thanked in the credits at the end of the restored print. Thus in *Spartacus* the theme of Roman sexual "deviance" is inextricably tied to the theme of corruption of absolute power, especially in the figure of Crassus and in the depiction of the aggressive elite women who arrive in his entourage. But the orgy scene, so shocking in the 1950s religious epics, has now been abandoned in favor of an even more "deviant" sexuality: the more private perversion of bisexuality, the merest suggestion of which was so "deviant" that it was censored from the film's original print. Regrettably it cannot be known how the 1960s audience would have responded to the "oysters and snails" scene, but by the time of the 1991 restoration it was considered mild enough to be reinstated in the film.

However, the idea of "deviance" inherent in showing group or public sex on screen is picked up in extreme fashion a few years later in two decidedly un-epic films: Federico Fellini's *Satyricon* (1969) and Bob Guccione's *Caligula* (1979). Fellini stated that his film was a deliberate attempt to alienate the audience from any familiarity with earlier cinematic Romes, and thus at the beginning of the film he stages a repulsive public sex sequence in the gritty Roman brothel, the Lupanare, in order to disaffect and distance the viewers from the narrative. This process of calculated estrangement is the exact opposite effect desired by most modern filmmakers and television producers, who for commercial reasons seek the maximum amount of viewer identification with their Roman characters: even if they are power-hungry and sexually "deviant," they are still attractive and sexy. Guccione's scandal-plagued film, disavowed as it was by both writer (Gore Vidal) and director (Tinto Brass), with its explicit orgy scenes showing every sexual act imaginable, was mainly intended as a publicity stunt for *Penthouse*, Guccione's hardcore print publication. So, because of its status as an artifact of particularly trashy niche filmmaking, most critics agree that this film had little influence on later depictions of sexuality in more mainstream productions set in ancient Rome.

Ridley Scott's *Gladiator* (2000), a spectacular critical and commercial success, marked a return to the Roman epic genre after 40

years. While the film echoes many of the themes and images present in earlier films set in Roman antiquity, *Gladiator* imparts a twenty-first century sensibility in its representation of the emblems of power and in the use of mass entertainment as spectacle. In terms of sexuality, *Gladiator* also revives the image of Roman corruption and debauchery that equates oppressive political power with sexual “deviance.” Like earlier films, *Gladiator* employs the image of transgressive sexuality to suggest the moral depravity of the Roman power elite. But there are no orgies in *Gladiator* and no bath scenes, outdoors or *en suite*. To discover what counts as “deviant” for the cinema audience at the turn of the second millennium, we must examine how the Emperor Commodus (Joaquin Phoenix) interacts with his elder sister, Lucilla (Connie Nielsen), whose desperate fear of her brother's cruelty casts a chill on every scene they share. Commodus expresses his incestuous yearnings for Lucilla in several scenes that clearly connect his aberrant erotic desires with his despotic plans for Rome. (see [Figure 37.2](#)). In an early scene, Commodus announces his wish to dissolve the Senate and invites Lucilla to stay the night with him with a single breath. Later, after the conspiracy is discovered, he spares Lucilla but demands she provide him with an heir to cement his dynasty, yelling: “Am I not merciful?” Commodus’ “deviant” sexuality parallels the depiction of the bisexuality of the wealthy Crassus hinted at in Kubrick's *Spartacus*, where the inversion of conventional sexual relations also reveals the dysfunction of the Roman value system and suggests an equation between aristocratic promiscuity and political voracity. Thus Commodus is marked as “deviant” because of his display of erotic desire for his sister; the theme of sibling incest—even as it is supported by the historical sources about Commodus—represents an escalation of the “deviance” level on the modern screen.

Figure 37.2 Commodus (Joaquin Phoenix) desires his sister Lucilla (Connie Nielsen) in *Gladiator* (2000). Directed by Ridley Scott. Scott Free Productions/ DreamWorks Pictures/ Universal Pictures.



Once again, the “deviant” Roman tyrant is set against the normative regular guy hero—in this case the grieving father figure and savior of Rome, Maximus (Russell Crowe). In profound contrast to the image of elite Roman sexuality gone awry, Maximus honors his deceased wife and remains celibate through a series of tension-filled encounters with his ex-lover, Lucilla. Note that Lucilla represents an inversion of the predatory female archetype from earlier films: she is an elite Roman female whose erotic desires are subordinated to her need to protect her family. In several brief meetings, Maximus and Lucilla negotiate the tricky boundaries of their past relationship and reconstruct it tentatively within the emotional gap created by their other broken familial bonds. Yet, unlike earlier epics, where the male hero has a heterosexual romance that eventually domesticates him, Maximus and Lucilla circle each other but never actually come back together. Only when Maximus lies dying in her arms in the final scene are they very nearly restored once again as a couple, since, like a good husband, he has provided her with security for herself and her son through his heroism, assuring her with his final breath: “Lucius is safe.” While Maximus ensures the secure attachment between imperial mother and son, throughout the entire film he remains devoted to the memory of his own wife and child, even when they are dead. Thus *Gladiator* defines “normal” sexuality through the figure of Maximus, the old-fashioned “soldier of Rome” and a faithful, nearly abstinent Roman husband and father. This perhaps responds to conservative popular aspirations at the turn of the millennium about the renewal of family bonds and a return to simple spirituality. So, 40 years after the oblique reference to bisexuality in *Spartacus* that was so shocking as to be censored, *Gladiator* raises the “deviance” bar with the suggestion of incest among the Roman imperial elite. Yet the onscreen tyrant Commodus only threatens his sister, not actually consummating his incestuous desires, which would perhaps have been too shocking for the mainstream cinema viewer at the turn of the millennium.

The following decade saw the production of three significant, yet very different films set in variously imagined times and locations of the ancient Greek world: Wolfgang Petersen's *Troy* (2004), Oliver Stone's *Alexander* (2004), and Zack Snyder's *300* (2007). Earlier, during the “golden age” of mid-century ancient world epics, a handful of important Greek-themed films were made, such as Robert Wise's *Helen of Troy* (1956), Robert Rossen's *Alexander the Great* (1956), and Rudolph Maté's *The 300 Spartans* (1962), but such films were vastly fewer in number than those set in ancient Rome, and far less successful critically and commercially. In explaining the difficulty of selling ancient Greece to movie audiences, Gideon Nisbet argues that the cinematic Greek world lacks an easily identifiable visual aesthetic

or singular urban image, and thus constantly suffers a confusing contamination from more recognizable Roman *mise en scène* and visual motifs (aqueducts, amphitheaters, legionary red cloaks); while ancient Greek thematic motifs—philosophers, democracy, art—are simply too boring and static and, even worse, smack of intellectual elitism, which is anathema to the cinema-going public. Above all, ancient Greek sex is a tough sell: stereotypically Greek sexuality, with its alien practice of pedagogical pederasty and those “easy” pagan girls unrepressed by Christian sexual morality, is simply too difficult to package for mainstream viewing audiences. As Nisbet (2006, 18) observes: “In the popular imagination, Romans win and lose empires, fight fur-clad barbarians, and bring on the dancing girls; Greeks discuss the nature of the Good or flirt with underage boys.” Unlike cinematic ancient Rome, which serves as an attractive and audience-friendly metaphor for the luxury and decadence of Hollywood itself, ancient Greece on screen resists viewer identification, and in terms of sex it refuses to entice viewers as it offers far less emphasis on or opportunity for erotic titillation.

These sexual complications, both visual and narrative, become evident in the three ancient Greece-themed films that followed ambitiously in the wake of *Gladiator*; in particular, the way each of these films deals with the issue of Greek homosexuality is problematic, even clumsy. In *Troy*, director Petersen went out of his way to disregard any sort of homoerotic subtext in the relationship between Achilles (Brad Pitt) and Patroklos (Garret Hedlund), which was attested in ancient Greek receptions of Homer: the film inelegantly rewrites Patroklos as an immature young “cousin” to Achilles, which produces some silly dialogue and sanitizes the pathos of Patroklos' death. At the same time, while it was natural for the film to emphasize the famous heterosexual romance between Paris and Helen that started the Trojan War, Achilles is given an even more prominent heteronormative role as the film's main romantic hero: the first scene finds him in bed with not one, but two women, to underscore his supercharged heterosexual skills, and later on he participates in an amplified, plot-driving love affair with the Trojan “priestess” Briseis (Rose Byrne). In contrast, Stone's *Alexander*, which premiered just six months afterwards, complicates the sexuality issue by depicting a protagonist who vacillates awkwardly among several different erotic tendencies: (see [Figure 37.3](#)): Alexander (Colin Farrell) is in love with Hephaestion (Jared Leto), but has angry sex with his wife, Roxane (Rosario Dawson), hot sex (safely off camera) with the comely eunuch, Bagoas (Francisco Bosch), and unresolved Oedipal feelings for his mother, Olympias (Angelina Jolie). The result is an emotionally diluted and sexually inconstant Alexander, definitely not the

heroically pan-sexual historical figure the director wanted to portray, that satisfied no audience constituency and led to both poor box office and scathing critical reviews. Snyder's hugely profitable *300* simply gives in to the temptations of camp aesthetics by exposing the Spartan warriors as exceptionally macho, athletically ripped superheroes, while locating any overt feminization securely onto the Other, represented by the barbarian Persian invaders. And, although Snyder presents Leonidas (Gerard Butler) as a somber, Maximus-style husband and father who dutifully dies to save Greek civilization, the film gained a degree of notoriety in popular culture for its homoerotic sensibility, given the generous number of strikingly fit, half-naked male bodies on display. Each of these Greek-themed films engages with the issue of homosexuality by sidestepping it—whether they ignore, confound, or wink at it—while films set in ancient Rome are able to offer “deviant” sexuality more candidly and without hesitation.

Figure 37.3 Alexander (Colin Farrell) receives a shoulder massage from Hephaestion (Jared Leto) in *Alexander* (2004). Directed by Oliver Stone. Intermedia Films/ Warner Bros.



Not surprisingly, it would take premium cable television to raise the contemporary “deviance” stakes. The HBO series *Rome* (2005–7), Bruno Heller's co-production with the BBC, was a massively expensive and critically lauded project that was originally planned to last beyond the two seasons it actually aired. Filmed at the celebrated Cinecittà studios in Rome, the series boasts big screen production values, along with some of the most sumptuous sets, costumes, and props ever put on film. The first season starts in 52 bce, follows Julius Caesar's return to Rome after his campaigns in Gaul, and ends with his assassination in 44 bce. The second season, highly time-compressed, depicts the power struggle between Mark Antony, Caesar's trusted general, and Octavian, his legal heir; it ends with the suicides of Antony and Cleopatra, followed by the triumph of Octavian in 29 bce. Like most films set in the ancient Roman past, the series *Rome* mixes

both historical figures and invented ones. But, unlike in earlier narratives about Roman antiquity, in the series *Rome* the elite and plebeian characters mix together freely at street level—in the forum, the brothels, the *insulae*, and the posh villas. Thus in terms of representing sexuality, the series follows some earlier cinematic conventions but also breaks new ground.

Since the series premiered on cable television, *Rome* both promised and delivered plentiful nudity and sexual situations. The great majority of the sexual acts portrayed in the series are what the typical Anglo-American viewer in the year 2005 would most likely deem “normal sex,” or at least not too exotic; but the quantity, frequency, and explicitness of it was at first shocking to many viewers. Among the plentiful scenes of sexual intercourse, the series *Rome* offers numerous heterosexual encounters between elite couples such as Caesar and Servilia, Antony and Atia, and later Antony and Cleopatra (note that these unions are mostly adulterous, though the series does not underscore this point); among the plebs, we have Vorenus and his wife Niobe, and Pullo and Eirene, as well as various paid-for partners. The series also shows an unhistorical lesbian sexual relationship between Servilia and Octavia, which could be described as “bi-curious” since both also have male lovers. There are also a handful of scenes of gay male sex showing older male servants with younger slave boys. All of these sequences are visually titillating in that they show attractive partners mutually taking pleasure in the sexual acts, and in aesthetic terms all are handled tastefully, so as not to shock (too much) modern sensibilities. There are very few sexual encounters in the series that cross class lines, and the elite characters generally do not have sex with their slaves.

One element of sexuality in the series *Rome* that did astonish viewers, and thus could be coded as “deviant,” was the depiction of couples having sex in front of other people: it is noteworthy that this voyeuristic aspect is often present in ancient Roman art as well, as in the Warren Cup (dated to the early first century ce by John Clarke), where a young boy is portrayed looking through a door to witness a copulation. Since the sexual act is considered by moderns to be “private,” sex in front of others could be seen as exotic, or even “deviant.” Though it is not quite a full-blown orgy, the series does depict many sexual acts between elites who perform before an audience of servants: this perhaps suggests that the series aims to depict the aristocrats' disconnect from the bodies that served them, as well as a general ancient Roman indifference to modern notions of “shame.” One example is a scene in the first season (Episode 8) where the young Cleopatra (Lyndsey Marshal) decides to ensure her pregnancy even before she meets Julius Caesar: she tries to seduce a

recalcitrant Vorenus (Kevin McKidd) before having energetic intercourse with Pullo (Ray Stevenson) in front of her ululating female slaves. While this “audition for coitus” scene is played for humor, especially in the contrast between Vorenus' and Pullo's different approaches to enjoying carnal pleasures, it also shocks by the presence of—and encouragement by—an audience for the sexual act, one that moderns suppose should be kept private.

Another scene of sex with an audience comes early in the first episode of the series. Atia (Polly Walker), the historical niece of Julius Caesar and a main protagonist, engages in sex with the horse trader, Timon (Lee Boardman), in full view of her slaves; (see [Figure 37.4](#)); it should be noted that, although this is the rare scene where an elite has sex with a lower class partner, Timon clearly is not a slave and there is no compulsion in their mutually agreeable sexual activity. While some viewers tittered at the graphic nudity, many gasped when Atia demands a cup of water from her chief female slave. What the series may be suggesting is that these scenes can be read as domestic or private orgy scenes in that sex takes place with an audience: *Rome* takes a big screen trope and condenses it for television. Also notice how the staging of these scenes actually mimics the experience of intimate television viewing: the home audience joins the slaves in Atia's bedroom as spectators to the titillation. As a character, Atia would seem to fit the cinematic stereotype of the sexually aggressive elite Roman female (like Poppaea); however, her many sexual encounters in the series are staged less for her personal pleasure than for political gain, that is, to secure the fortunes of her family. This would align her more with the power strategies of elite males in earlier depictions of ancient Rome on screen.

Figure 37.4 Atia (Polly Walker) astride the horse-trader Timon (Lee Boardman) in the first season of *Rome* (2005). Created by Bruno Heller, William J. MacDonald, and John Milius. HBO-BBC.



The scene concludes with Atia in her bath covertly spied on by her young teenage son, Octavian (Max Pirkis), the eventual *princeps* Augustus. Among the many sexually active elite male characters in the series *Rome*, it is the character of Octavian who is coded as most “deviant”: in this he follows the cinematic tradition of Crassus, and especially of Commodus. As the series suggests over the course of several episodes in the first season, Octavian nurses a secret sexual longing for his sister, Octavia (Kerry Condon); this culminates in an act of sibling intercourse, which Octavia tearfully regrets and Octavian blames on his sister's manipulative scheming (Episode 9). Thus, in the first season of the series, when Octavian is still a boy, his budding “deviance” is depicted in his incestuous desire for Octavia: this recalls the “deviant” sexual yearnings of Commodus in *Gladiator*. But the series *Rome* escalates the trope of “deviance” in that Octavian actually has sexual intercourse with Octavia; and in line with his portrayal, he is shown to deconstruct the event coldly, while Octavia falls to pieces. Octavian's “deviance” is a trope that is carried through to the second season. Here the young adult Octavian (Simon Woods), while trying to control the sexuality of everyone around him, is revealed to have sadomasochistic proclivities in bed with his peculiar young wife, Livia (Alice Henley). These scenes showing Octavian's perverse sexual appetites—which include spanking and erotic asphyxiation—are intercut with scenes where he exercises strict sexual control over his family and the upper classes of Rome. This continues the image of the elite Roman male whose sexual “deviance” is equated with his abnormal hunger for power.

In 2010 the STARZ premium cable channel premiered the first season of *Spartacus: Blood and Sand*, a successful retelling of the story from producers Sam Raimi and Rob Tapert (of *Xena* and *Hercules*

fame), starring Lucy Lawless as Lucretia, the wife of the ruthless *lanista* Batiatus (John Hannah). The series is a heady mix of 300-style CGI-enhanced violence—highly stylized with fountains of blood frozen in mid-air and then splattering—with an extraordinary amount of onscreen nudity (full frontal, lateral, and dorsal) and graphic sexual acts of all varieties: heterosexual, homosexual (both females and males), group sex, masturbation, and explicit, nearly constant voyeurism of all these acts. *Gods of the Arena* (2011), a “prequel” to the first season, utilizes the same tropes to represent an incomparable amount of onscreen sexual activity. However, the third installment of the series, *Spartacus: Vengeance* (2012), depicts far less sexual activity, perhaps because of its greater political focus on the slave rebellion. Yet these series portray so much pornographic sex and brutal violence—with the scenes often cut together, so that the sex and violence are shown to be complementary acts—that the viewer becomes inured to it after a while and finds it difficult to define exactly what is “deviant” amid all the unbridled and explicitly detailed sexual activity.

The question is what would count as an escalation of the intimations of incest and sadomasochism depicted in *Rome*. To be sure, the *Spartacus* series uses even more graphic sex and nudity in order to underline abusive power relationships: here the presentation of the jaded voyeurism of the “deviant” Roman elite is emphasized, and frequently presented through the female desiring gaze. Many sequences of the series portray the ultra-sexualized parties at the villa of Batiatus, who uses his “special” entertainments to try to gain favor with the super-elites and to enhance the fortunes of his *ludus*: these scenes show the male gladiator slaves and the female domestic slaves being used for the visual and physical sexual pleasure of the Roman aristocrats. More than any other onscreen depiction of Roman sexual “deviance,” the new *Spartacus* series exploits the notion of the power differential between masters and slaves and the idea of non-compliance in sexual activity. While in the *Rome* series slaves provided the audience to elite sexual activity, in the *Spartacus* series the slaves are more blatantly objectified and forced to participate in the sexual *tableaux*. One remarkable scene shows Lucretia and Batiatus discussing their business ambitions during a bath, while their nude female slave girls arouse them sexually before they engage in conjugal intercourse. Many viewers found this scene shocking due to the openly erotic relationship of the *bourgeois* married couple: the two use their slaves as objects, as live marital aids, to enhance their sexual excitement over their own growing social power.

But, while Lucretia is the *domina* of the *ludus*, her status is also ambiguous. As in other depictions of Roman antiquity, and specifically in the retellings of the Spartacus story, slavery at Rome is presented as

a temporary and always evolving condition, so that it adds a *frisson* of ambiguity to the sexual dynamics between master and slave: the viewer wonders how to interpret the hierarchy of sex and power in Lucretia's relationships. In a number of scenes, the audience watches Lucretia as she engages in a torrid secret affair with the champion gladiator-slave, Crixus (Manu Bennett); but Crixus attends to his *domina*'s sexual needs unwillingly, because he loves Naevia, a slave girl who serves Lucretia. Like earlier depictions of ancient Roman sexuality, the *Spartacus* series presents sexually aggressive and even dominant women; indeed some have suggested the series breaks new ground in that is intentionally visually oriented toward a thrill-seeking female audience, offering masculine-style—that is, with the subject being an active pursuer—pornography to women. Many scenes portray the women in the series with aggressively penetrating gazes as they ogle and then possess the male bodies at the *ludus*. (see [Figure 37.5](#)). In an escalation of the selection scene in the earlier *Spartacus* film, the audience watches the arrogant *matrona*, Ilithyia (Viva Bianca), as she chooses her gladiator favorite according to how much he arouses her as a potential sexual partner, and specifically by the size of his manhood: the scene explicitly shows a row of male gladiators removing their loin cloths at her behest to reveal their naked penises.

Figure 37.5 Ilithyia (Viva Bianca) takes possession of Crixus (Manu Bennett) in *Spartacus: Blood and Sand* (2010). Created by Steven S. DeKnight. Starz.



One of the more shocking scenes in the series comes late in the first season, in an episode entitled “Whore.” This scene draws together many of the series' explicit themes of sexual “deviance,” in particular

the sexually appetitive female gaze and the objectification of (particularly) male slave bodies. In this sequence Spartacus is prostituted to the elite Roman women, who desire to experience the thrill of his sexual performance. First he is covered in gold leaf and masked by an adoring army of female slaves: the camera shows the male body under the control of female hands, as he is prepared for female eyes and female flesh to enjoy. The subjugated male is presented as an object created by female artists for their own use and pleasure. Elsewhere in the series, images of male nudity and scenes where male sexuality is consumed by females are often framed artistically between columns, statues, and curtains.

From the hints of alluring yet subversive homosexuality in DeMille's *The Sign of the Cross* to the censored “oysters and snails” scene in Kubrick's *Spartacus*; from the intimations of imperial incest in *Gladiator* to Rome's actualization of incest and sadomasochism in the character of the controlling Octavian; from the rosy spyglass of the predatory Poppaea in *Quo Vadis* to Ilithyia's greedy consumption of male flesh in the *Spartacus* series—these depictions suggest that the corruption of the Roman power elite may be the most constant and recurring cinematic element of sexual “deviance” in the screening of the ancient world, one that is easily intensified and escalated as it is adapted to the audience's changing tastes and expectations for visual and narrative thrills.

Guide to Further Reading

The most comprehensive study on the subject is the pioneering work of Solomon 2001, whose lively commentaries on over 400 films are abundantly illustrated. Still useful for its perceptive analyses of the epic film genre is Elley 1984. An updated take on the epic film can now be found in Burgoyne 2008, and Burgoyne 2011 offers a collection of essays on the rejuvenation of the modern genre. On cinema's relation to the classical epic tradition, see now Paul 2013. For recent surveys of the ancient world on screen, see Pomeroy 2008, and Blanshard and Shahabudin 2011; for essays on the ancient world in mass popular culture, see the volume edited by Lowe and Shahabudin 2009. On the depiction of ancient Greece in the popular media, especially the problem of representing ancient Greek culture for modern audiences, see Nisbet 2006. On the portrayal of ancient Rome on film, focusing on individual figures and events from Roman history depicted in cinema since the early 1900s, see Wyke 1997; for essays on ancient Rome in modern popular culture, see the volume

edited by Joshel, Malamud, and McGuire 2001. Cyrino 2005 explores in detail the production and significance of nine major films that recreate Roman antiquity. For studies of specific films and filmmakers dealing with the ancient world, see Bondanella 1992 on Fellini; Winkler edited several essay collections, including volumes on *Gladiator* (Winkler 2004), *Spartacus* (Winkler 2007a), and *Troy* (Winkler 2007b); on *Quo Vadis*, see Scodel and Bettenworth 2009; on *Alexander*, see Cartledge and Greenland 2010. On the critically acclaimed first season of the HBO-BBC television series *Rome*, see the collection of essays edited by Cyrino 2008. For various representations of love and sex in films and television series that evoke ancient mythology, literature, and history, see now the volume edited by Cyrino 2013.

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